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## Second Families of Virginia: Professional Power-Brokers in a Revolutionary Age, 1700-1790

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The University of Southern Mississippi

SECOND FAMILIES OF VIRGINIA: PROFESSIONAL POWER-BROKERS IN A  
REVOLUTIONARY AGE, 1700-1790

by

Wesley Thomas Joyner

Abstract of a Dissertation  
Submitted to the Graduate School  
of The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2013

## ABSTRACT

### SECOND FAMILIES OF VIRGINIA: PROFESSIONAL POWER-BROKERS IN A REVOLUTIONARY AGE, 1700-1790

by Wesley Thomas Joyner

May 2013

Between 1700 and 1790, a diverse assortment of merchants, lawyers, doctors, soldiers, and various other specialists forged a prominent position in Virginia that was integral to the colony's planter-elites. These professionals complicated Virginia's social hierarchy and affected numerous decisions planters made on personal business ventures, urban development, military conflicts, and political policies. Consequently, as Virginia planters struggled to maintain a sense of socioeconomic dominance, political influence, and familial solidarity, this upper-middling, professional contingent forced planters to compromise their seemingly exclusive modes of behavior. Accounting for the perspectives of professionals and planters, this study addresses how and why this occurred, as well as what it indicated about the deceptively open and fluid nature of a colonial society that many historians continue to view as overwhelmingly hierarchical and static.

Prior to 1700, the colony's great planters monopolized most of the tasks that professionals eventually controlled. Additionally, planters created and perpetuated a culture of exclusivity in Virginia which, despite its aristocratic demeanor, was largely based on false hereditary entitlements and genteel posturing. However, by 1750, many Virginia professionals were challenging such pretensions and becoming successful in the

same ways that planters had in the previous century, just with different occupations. In addition to being as well-educated as Virginia's planters, professionals became crucial to planters' business dealings, married into planter families, and even earned enough income to make tobacco planting a secondary pursuit.

Such developments propelled Virginia's professionals to higher status; and by the American Revolution, planters were increasingly welcoming professionals into their ranks and preparing some of their sons to pursue full-time occupations outside of plantation management. By doing this, planters kept pace with changing socioeconomic conditions, avoided a catastrophic loss of political power, and salvaged their cultural respectability as plantation-masters. Moreover, as many professionals parlayed their accomplishments and wealth into the purchase of land, slaves, and/or fine homes, the planter-professional relationship was mutually beneficial. Professionals who successfully defied the exclusionist antics of planter-elites became the next major beneficiaries of Virginia's *relatively* open society. Yet, Virginia planters still retained the old vestiges of their power and culture well into the nineteenth century.

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IN A REVOLUTIONARY AGE, 1700-1790

by

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A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate School  
of The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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May 2013

## DEDICATION

*To Mom, Dad, and Amber*

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Thesis and Historical Background

Between roughly 1700 and 1790, a diverse assortment of merchants, lawyers, doctors, manufacturers, professional soldiers, and various other specialists forged positions of power and influence in Virginia which proved integral to the colony's class of ruling planter-elites. These professionals—most all of whom were either eighteenth-century European immigrants or the sons of native families that had settled in Virginia after 1700—complicated Virginia's social hierarchy and affected a variety of decisions planters made on personal business ventures, urban and commercial development, military conflicts, and political policies. Consequently, while Virginia's great planters struggled to maintain their socioeconomic dominance, political influence, and familial solidarity in the midst of continual change, this *upper-middling*, professional contingent delicately altered the nature and composition of Virginia's elite strata. By the latter decades of the eighteenth century, professionals had not only forced planters to compromise some of their most exclusive, *aristocratic* behaviors, but they had also encouraged planters to adopt a more progressive socioeconomic outlook for future generations and make room within elite ranks for new, professional members.

For the planter descendants of Virginia's First Families (FFVs), the rise of upper-middling professionals embodied planters' greatest hopes and fears for upholding their preexisting claims to authority, influence, and privilege. On one hand, the financial success and newfound prestige of Virginia professionals represented a discomfoting potential for entry into what planters had previously worked hard to characterize as a

highly exclusive planter *aristocracy*.<sup>1</sup> Yet, on the other hand, many of those same Virginians also possessed the occupational expertise necessary to keep in step with a number of significant economic, urban, and demographic changes that occurred in eighteenth-century Virginia—a fact that made upper-middling professionals potentially useful allies to the planter class.

Within the contours of this intriguing dilemma, Virginia's oldest and newest power-brokers engaged in a subtle, but critical process of negotiation throughout much of the eighteenth century. Seeking their share of the socioeconomic pie planters had previously reserved only for themselves, professionals allowed the growing demand for their talents and skills to subliminally forge an advantageous position in Virginia, one by which they could not only fatten their purses, but also enhance their prospects for social mobility. In the meantime, planters continuously did their best to meet such developments by selectively bending their criteria for *aristocratic* membership and making mutually beneficial overtures of professional inclusion—neither of which required planters to relinquish too much of their former dominance. Accounting for the perspectives and actions of both professionals and planters, this study addresses how and why this occurred as well as what it indicated about the deceptively open and fluid nature of a colonial society that many historians continue to view as overwhelmingly hierarchical and static.

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<sup>1</sup> Because colonial Virginia's wealthiest planters came to view themselves as natural aristocrats within Virginia's society, I have employed the terms *aristocrats* and *aristocracy* throughout this study in describing the colony's planters and the planter class, respectively. However, since so many progenitors of Virginia's planter class were descended from non-aristocratic backgrounds, financially ruined upon their arrival in the colony, and/or estranged from their well-to-do families in Europe, I take issue with the overall legitimacy of their aristocratic identities, especially since their English contemporaries did so too. Thus, by continuously italicizing the aforementioned terms, I have attempted to indicate the problems I have with the terms without sacrificing attention to the rather substantive cultural power that an "aristocratic" society possessed in the minds of Virginia planters and their neighbors.

Prior to when professionals first noticeably began immigrating to Virginia in the early-to-mid portion of the eighteenth century, a fairly small clan of planting families had gained control over most of the colony's internal affairs. Families with surnames like Carter, Harrison, Byrd, Lee, Tayloe, Randolph, and Burwell, among others, had not only amassed great tobacco planting fortunes during the mid-to-late seventeenth century, but also parlayed their financial success into great political power. This political standing was so substantial that subsequent generations of these families were actually able to base their *aristocratic* legitimacy on the affluence and the successes of their prominent Virginia forebears, most of who ironically hailed from the middling and lesser-gentry ranks of English society.<sup>2</sup>

To continually strengthen and maintain their incredible social, economic, and political standing, Virginia planters had to assume multiple occupational roles in their day-to-day lives. In fact, as planters' proficiencies in various specializations improved over time, they grew increasingly accustomed to monopolizing most all of the tasks and/or duties that full-time professionals eventually controlled. In addition to occupying almost all of seats on the Royal Governor's Council, the members of colonial Virginia's planter class also served as Burgesses and church vestrymen, commanded their local militias, surveyed land patents, and dabbled just enough in domestic tobacco consignment, legal philosophy, and the study of the humanities to respectively operate

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<sup>2</sup> For ancestral analyses of Virginia's planter aristocracy, see the following: Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, *Patrician and Plebeian in Virginia* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1959); David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Martin H. Quitt, "Immigrant Origins of the Virginia Gentry: A Study of Cultural Transmission and Innovation," *WMQ*, Third Series, Vol. 45, No. 4 (Oct., 1988), 630-655; and Carole Shammas, "English-Born and Creole Elites in Turn-of-the-Century Virginia," in *The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth-Century: Essays on Anglo-American Society*, eds. Thad W. Tate and David L. Ammerman, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 274-296.

their own plantation stores, serve as county court justices, and fancy themselves as learned intellectuals and men of science.

Additionally, planters and their kin created and perpetuated a culture of social, economic, and political exclusivity in Virginia. This culture, despite its heavy reliance on genteel posturing and false hereditary assumptions, reinforced planter legitimacy and the stratified social order they wished to oversee. Especially by the beginning of eighteenth century, the leading men of Virginia's great planter families envisioned themselves as a choice group of entitled, enlightened, and *aristocratic* gentlemen.

Indeed, because so many of Virginia's tobacco barons were, in reality, such a far cry from England's more established and wealthier aristocrats, planters soon realized that the most important way for them to continuously sustain their power and influence was to maintain elite appearances. Although the rigorous work schedules of planters hardly allowed them to be true landed lords of leisure, they nevertheless went to great lengths to make it seem as if they were.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, in planters' attempts to counter European criticisms of provinciality, they emulated the English landed gentry in nearly every visible way imaginable. Colonial Virginia planters wore simple, yet sheik wardrobes made from European fabrics, engaged in the rustic, yet refined pursuits of hunting and gaming, and built expensively lavish brick homes, replete with fine furniture, dancing halls, and formal gardens.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Carl Bridenbaugh, *Myths and Realities; Societies of the Colonial South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952).

<sup>4</sup> Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities*, 1st ed. (New York: Knopf, 1992); Peter Martin, *The Pleasure Gardens of Virginia: From Jamestown to Jefferson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Nancy L. Struna, *People of Prowess : Sport, Leisure, and Labor in Early Anglo-America*, Sport and Society (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996); Thomas Tileston Waterman, *The Mansions of Virginia, 1706-1776* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1946).

A variety of other, less materialistic factors made Virginia's planter class an even more exclusive, cohesive group. Politically, Virginia's planters believed that it was their Aristotelian duty to hold all major offices so that they could better oversee, protect, and fairly judge their social inferiors. Socially and economically, they relied on one another's patronage and intermarriage to consistently maintain and/or increase their particular family's wealth and rank. Lastly, Virginia planters adhered to the multilayered tenets of a presumptuous "tobacco culture"—one where they were the spiritual custodians of a cash crop that made them grand masters of sweet-scented fiefdoms.<sup>5</sup>

With repeated practice, such beliefs and customs became fairly well ensconced in the minds of both Virginia planters and their immediate neighbors. Furthermore, because so many colonists became tacitly conditioned into accepting the cultural and social mores of their social superiors, Virginia's great planters were able to usher in a golden age of affluence mostly on their own terms. As far as they were concerned, it was paramount for everyone to understand that Virginia had always been a legitimate *plantocracy*, strictly closed off to unworthy or unrelated outsiders.

On the surface, such facts might have at first seemed problematic to professionals who wished to live and thrive in colonial Virginia. Because so many professionals entered Virginia after planters had already set such fixed and predetermined parameters on the colony's society, the most that a non-connected, non-planting outsider in early eighteenth-century Virginia could seemingly hope for was to receive some modest form planter patronage if he wished to be successful. Furthermore, since so many Virginia professionals prioritized their occupational specializations either on par or ahead of

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<sup>5</sup> For a detailed analysis of "tobacco culture," see T.H. Breen, *Tobacco Culture: The Mentality of the Great Tidewater Planters on the Eve of Revolution*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).



planting, their less-pronounced attachments to the colony's sacred planting traditions forced them, at least initially, to exist and operate on the fringes of Virginia's haughty *aristocratic* society.

However, by the middle of the eighteenth century, many Virginia professionals were challenging such artificial pretensions and becoming successful in the same ways that planters had done in the previous century, just with different occupations. As increasing numbers of Virginians and Pennsylvanians moved west into the Shenandoah Valley and the establishment of port cities, fall-line towns, and backcountry settlements concomitantly increased, several new waves of immigration from England, Scotland, Ireland, France, and Germany steadily infused a significant number of mid-to-upper-middling men and their families into Virginia. Some of these men were recruited by large planters to survey and develop recently patented western lands. Others simply came on their own volition, hoping to make their way in a new, expansive environment—one that offered more financial promise, land availability, religious toleration, and social mobility than what they could expect elsewhere. Regardless of personal motivations, the circumstances and occupations of these men proved fundamentally different from those of Virginia planters.<sup>6</sup>

From this point forward in Virginia's history, both immigrant and native-born professionals made overt attempts to assert themselves among those already in power—actions both validated and enabled by the colony's steadily evolving capitalist landscape and an ever-increasing need for military protection. Particularly by the middle of the

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<sup>6</sup> Fischer, *Albion's Seed*; David Hackett Fischer and James C. Kelly, *Bound Away: Virginia and the Westward Movement* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000); Robert D. Mitchell, *Commercialism and Frontier: Perspectives on the Early Shenandoah Valley* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977); Marie Tyler-McGraw, *At the Falls: Richmond, Virginia and Its People* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

eighteenth century, Virginia was undergoing socioeconomic changes that belied its seemingly exclusive agricultural appearance. The steady rise of port cities like Norfolk and Alexandria, the growth of the capital in Williamsburg, and the establishment of small towns like Richmond, Petersburg, Urbanna, Winchester, Fredericksburg, and Dumfries continually exposed Virginia's colonists to less rural surroundings and a broader free market of goods and services.

In accordance with these developments, Virginia's demand for more legitimate services in the legal, medical, and commercial sectors also grew markedly. Soon thereafter, planters were no longer able to effectively manage every single facet of the colony's affairs as they had done before. Professionals, meanwhile, began to fill the void by assuming a much more active and influential role in Virginia's economic and sociopolitical realms.

Thus, even as colonial Virginia's unrelenting reliance on tobacco and slavery prevented the emergence of a major city like Boston, New York, or Philadelphia and hindered the growth of a large white, urban laboring class, the colony's socioeconomic landscape still grew and diversified, albeit in its own unique way. Especially with the declining power of Virginia's county court system, the rise of the cargo system in the Atlantic World, and the continual establishment of new towns, cash-poor sons of middling Virginia families and their well-educated immigrant counterparts soon became licensed attorneys, trained to become physicians, and/or secured lines of overseas credit for independent mercantile and manufacturing operations.<sup>7</sup> At the very least, these men

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<sup>7</sup> For the impact of the cargo system on domestic merchants, see Jacob M. Price, "Economic Function and the Growth of American Port Towns in the Eighteenth-Century," in *Perspectives in American History*, Vol. VIII, eds. Donald Fleming and Bernard Bailyn, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974). For analyses

stood to supplement any money they made in tobacco cultivation and improve their social status.

Likewise, as Virginians took part in the French and Indian War, Dunmore's War, and the American War for Independence, the colony's protection and expansionist interests necessitated a greater professionalization of the colony's military forces, particularly in the westernmost portions of the colony. This need proved critical to the colony's low-to-middling contingent since military service gave even average colonists a chance to distinguish themselves as professional soldiers or, in some cases, enhance their preexisting status as physicians in wartime. In short, a growing number of professionals stood at the forefront of numerous transformations taking place in eighteenth-century Virginia. Planters were ultimately forced to take notice.

Over time, Virginia's planters responded to this trend with a series of subtle, yet strategic moves. First, planters gradually assumed a fairly non-antagonistic attitude towards most professionals operating in their midst. The majority of such men, after all, were hardly plucked from the lowest dregs of society. Generally speaking, they were bright, ambitious, and intellectually sophisticated men, well enough educated or accomplished in their respective fields to garner both the respect of planters and a modicum of gentlemanly status. Even in the seemingly exceptional case of resident Scottish merchants, who planters claimed to especially loathe, professional and social relations between the two groups were not always as cut-and-dry as one might first be led to believe. As Albert Tillson has conceded, planters may have outwardly complained

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on the growth of the medical and legal professions in Virginia, see Wyndham Bolling Blanton, *Medicine in Virginia in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: AMS Press, 1980) and A. G. Roeber, *Faithful Magistrates and Republican Lawyers: Creators of Virginia Legal Culture, 1680-1810* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981).

about Scottish merchants competing in the tobacco market and polluting *noble* colonial bloodlines by marrying the daughters of Virginia planters. Yet, despite such negativity, planters could often be found socializing and conducting business with many of the same merchants that they lambasted in their letters and diaries.<sup>8</sup>

Additionally, by the 1760s, the various services that the professional sector offered to those living within Virginia's burgeoning capitalist environment had become virtually indispensable. While professionally trained and commissioned soldiers on Virginia's western peripheries protected colonists from Indian attacks and licensed attorneys argued everyday colonists' cases in court, domestically operating merchants and factors exposed consumers to new markets and commodities. Similarly, as a growing number of physicians set up practices in rapidly-expanding settlements and tended to sick people from all backgrounds, freelancing entrepreneurs surveyed new territories, helped to facilitate the establishment of more towns, improved iron and coal manufacturing operations, and speculated in western lands. The colony's ruling contingent of planter-elites could not ignore such trends, particularly since they ultimately became dependent, ravenous consumers of professional goods and services. Over time, therefore, planters gradually modified their mercantilist ideology and presumptuous tobacco culture to better coincide long-term with professional interests.

Instead of openly admitting any feelings of acquiescence or deference towards the professionals they had grown to depend upon, planters gradually employed a more subtle, diversionary plan of action—they simply incorporated some upper-middling, professional men into planter ranks. Prompted on one hand by necessity and by their inbred

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<sup>8</sup> Albert H. Tillson, *Accommodating Revolutions: Virginia's Northern Neck in an Era of Transformation, 1760-1810* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 170-179.

commercial sensibilities on the other, many of Virginia's wealthiest planters continually patronized professionals through personal business transactions, encouraged subsequent generations to train in professional occupations outside of plantation management, and adopted an ideological mantra in the wake of the American Revolution that outwardly espoused individual liberty, commerce, and self-improvement, all of which were essential elements of the professional persona. In some cases, rather considerate planters even went so far as to endorse the marriages of some of their daughters to ambitious (yet slightly less illustrious) suitors who prioritized professional pursuits ahead of plantation management.

In fact, by the beginning of the American Revolution, it had already become increasingly difficult to clearly differentiate between planters and professionals in the same way as generations before. This was especially the case by 1790, since many of the same Virginians who gained wealth, political positions, or military renown during the eighteenth century by way of their professional status had begun to parlay such success into purchases reminiscent of the planter class. In addition to the time and money they reinvested into their own lines of business, professionals invested heavily in the purchase of western lands, slaves, plantation estates, and/or fine urban real estate.

Considering that the only major change of note in such a scenario was that commerce and professionalism could now supersede the old, but extant elements of Virginia's plantation society, the ultimate outcome was mutually beneficial to planters and professionals alike. Planters managed to keep pace with changing socioeconomic conditions, avoid a total and catastrophic loss of political power, and salvage the accrued cultural respectability they had gained as tobacco plantation masters. Meanwhile, those

professionals who successfully defied the exclusionist antics of planter-elites got to be the second major beneficiaries of a colonial Virginian society that, for all intents and purposes, had always—albeit deceptively—been open to white men of substantive talent and ambition.

### Historiography

Over the past century, historians have written much about colonial Virginia's planters, slaves, poor whites, and Indians. Significantly fewer studies, however, have treated the colony's contingent of non-laboring, upper-middling professionals—men who relied on their business acumens, occupational specialties, and/or military service to traverse the imposing gap between poor farmers and wealthier, large-scale plantation owners. In fact, while many historians have conceded that places like Virginia offered a great deal of promise and economic opportunities for colonists who might have otherwise been poor, landless peasants in Europe, many still continue to write about colonial Virginia as if its society was devoid of any legitimate middle-class or upper-middling, professional contingent.

Primarily pointing to the large material and financial discrepancies between rich and poor and a lack of major cities and urban workers, mid-twentieth-century scholars like Louis Wright and Carl Bridenbaugh argued that since Virginia was a predominantly agricultural colony in which most of the wealth and land belonged to a rather small class of major tobacco planters, most of those who made up the colony's comparatively larger mass of free whites were generally prevented from ever attaining any true form of

middle-class status.<sup>9</sup> Even Richard Hofstadter, who on one hand candidly acknowledged the existence of a middling farmer element in colonial Virginia, equally stressed that a lack of class consciousness and common discontent among such middling men during the eighteenth century prevented them from becoming a truly unified, relevant presence.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, when historians have alluded to instances where colonial Virginians were neither poor farmers nor extremely wealthy planters, such men and their families (i.e. the Washington and Mason families) have mostly been characterized as lower-tier, fringe members of Virginia's planter *aristocracy* as opposed to middling or upper-middling colonists.

By extension, these interpretations have affected the manner in which historians have comprehended professionals' place in colonial Virginia's society. Bridenbaugh, Jack Greene, and Charles Sydnor have all, for instance, made specific references to the presence and prominence of some professionals in Virginia by the early-to-mid eighteenth century. Nevertheless, they have implied that in most cases, these were still upper-crust planters who prioritized planting and the interests of the planter class above any professional interests they may have had. Basically lumping all of the Chesapeake's planters and professionals together, Bridenbaugh wrote that "membership among the F.F.C.'s (First Families of the Chesapeake) came naturally and exclusively to the richest planting families and to the Anglican clergy, native merchants, physicians, and lawyers

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<sup>9</sup> Bridenbaugh, *Myths and Realities*; Louis B. Wright, *The First Gentlemen of Virginia; Intellectual Qualities of the Early Colonial Ruling Class*, Huntington Library Publications (San Marino, CA: The Huntington Library, 1940).

<sup>10</sup> Richard Hofstadter, *America at 1750: A Social Portrait* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973).

(especially in Maryland) associated with them, who more often than not divided their time between their social interests and agriculture.”<sup>11</sup>

Even while Greene conceded that a hint of separation existed in eighteenth-century Virginia between a “small class of merchants and lawyers” and “the dominant plantation elite,” his greater contention was that elements of crossover and

interchangeability between the two groups resulted in a natural political alliance.<sup>12</sup>

Collectively, these arguments reflect a planter-dominant paradigm in the historiography of colonial Virginia. More specifically, it is a paradigm where, despite a few minor exceptions of complication and fluidity, colonial Virginia was a closed society in which the substantive space between wealthy planters and other white Virginians remained largely unoccupied.

Many arguments predicated on this planter-dominant paradigm continue to offer sound insight, especially since much of the evidence examined by historians to this point still indicates—at least on the surface—that the planting class alone “set the tone of Southern societies, established the articulate traditions, and had the lion’s share of making the ruling decisions.”<sup>13</sup> Additionally, since no one can deny that colonial Virginia was an agrarian slave society with no truly large cities, the assumption that Virginia had a lesser potential for spawning middling factions appears more than reasonable. However, by simply falling back on these axioms time and again, historians

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<sup>11</sup> Bridenbaugh, *Myths and Realities*, 10.

<sup>12</sup> Jack P. Greene, *Political Life in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1986), 11. Also see Charles S. Sydnor, *Gentlemen Freeholders; Political Practices in Washington's Virginia* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, Va., 1952).

<sup>13</sup> Hofstadter, *America at 1750*, 158.



continue to overlook a variety of factors that, if taken into consideration, might cause them to alter or at least modify their opinions.

One of these factors concerns the flawed assumptions that previous historians have assigned to the nature of colonial Virginia's social ladder and its agrarian economy. Others are more simply based on reconsidering the works of an early twentieth-century historian and creatively connecting his conclusions to the analyses of several more current scholars. Taken together though, all of the factors are ultimately geared towards interpreting colonial Virginia in a new way. The colony was not just a strictly rural, closed society, exclusively ruled by planter elites, but a deceptively progressive and adaptive environment where agriculture did not always thrive at the expense of economic and urban growth and hierarchical class relations between white people could often be more superficial than substantive. Colonial Virginia was, in short, a place where professionals were particularly able to take advantage of such peculiarities and slowly become formidable presences, capable of altering both planter behavior and numerous aspects of the colony/state's future development.

The first of these aforementioned factors concerns two interrelated developments: the growing importance of small cities and towns in eighteenth-century Virginia and the concomitant increase in the number and worth of Virginian professionals. Both trends, in a purely theoretical sense, embody the polar opposite of a static, exclusively plantation-oriented society. However, Virginia did experience some noticeable urban growth throughout the eighteenth century and professionals increasingly incorporated themselves into locales where such growth occurred. Additionally, as the studies of A.G. Roeber, Arthur Schlesinger, Jacob Price, Wyndham Bolling Blanton, and numerous others attest,

any generalized assumption that one could only be a slave, poor-to-middling farmer, or wealthy planter in colonial Virginia is intrinsically flawed. There were clearly others whose professional status kept them from fitting solely into any of those categories, especially after 1720. Particularly since some of these professionals played a pivotal role in determining the course of events in the colony both before and after the American Revolution, relegating their presence to the minute margins of planter society simply will not do.<sup>14</sup>

The second factor concerns the paradox of Virginia's middle-class planter *aristocracy*. Contrary to popular mythology and the aesthetic posturing associated with Virginia's tobacco culture, T.J. Wertenbaker and many subsequent historians have rightly argued that, for the most part, the colony's ruling class of FFVs constituted nothing more than an illegitimate aristocracy. Derived from both the low-to-middling ranks of English society and the lesser, financially ruined sons of the English gentry, Virginia's planter families were only as elite as they told themselves they were.<sup>15</sup> And although cultural historians like Michael Rozbicki and Richard Bushman have touched on the various ways in which Virginia's planters attempted to legitimize their upper-class status in spite of such truths, the bottom line was that much of Virginia's planter class was originally built on the work and success of self-made, middling men.<sup>16</sup>

The fact that such a ruse rested at the very foundation of Virginia's stratified class hierarchy indicates that self-fashioning and a profitable skill-set could potentially have

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<sup>14</sup> Blanton, *Medicine in Virginia in the Eighteenth Century*; Jacob M. Price, *Tobacco Atlantic Trade: The Chesapeake, London, and Glasgow, 1675-1775* (Brookfield, VT.: Variorum, 1995); Roeber, *Faithful Magistrates and Republican Lawyers*; Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution, 1763-1776* (New York: F. Ungar Pub. Co., 1957).

<sup>15</sup> Wertenbaker, *Patrician and Plebeian*.

<sup>16</sup> Bushman, *The Refinement of America*; Michal J. Rozbicki, *The Complete Colonial Gentleman: Cultural Legitimacy in Plantation America* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998).

just as much to do with determining one's place in colonial Virginia's society as the possession of great wealth, tobacco plantations, and family connections. In fact, it would do some good from time to time to ponder the fundamental reality that most elite Virginia families could have never possessed the latter without first cultivating the former. While great tobacco planters unequivocally dominated Virginia's social food chain by 1700, they were not so presumptuous as to simply ignore any and every group beneath their self-contrived, aristocratic station. This was particularly applicable to professionals, since they possessed talents and skills that planters could potentially utilize and appropriate for their own benefit.

If one also takes into account more recent studies by Edmund Morgan, Anthony Parent, Rhys Isaac, Woody Holton, Emory Evans, and Albert Tillson, it appears that while planters may have technically ruled over colonial Virginia, they were nevertheless always on the defensive, constantly having to redefine themselves and cultivate new relationships in accordance with a variety of socioeconomic, religious, and political changes in their environment.<sup>17</sup> Once again, this was clearly the case with Virginia's professionals since planters, in their quests for survival and future profit, ultimately needed to befriend and/or ally with professionals more than professionals needed planters' endorsement of their occupational activities.

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<sup>17</sup> Emory G. Evans, *A "Topping People": The Rise and Decline of Virginia's Old Political Elite, 1680-1790* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009); Woody Holton, *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by University of North Carolina Press, 1982); Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1975); Anthony S. Parent, *Foul Means: The Formation of a Slave Society in Virginia, 1660-1740* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Tillson, *Accommodating Revolutions*.

As present-day historiography has still yet to adequately link together all of these factors, a group of individuals that undeniably existed and thrived in between the two polar extremes of colonial Virginia's society remains understudied and almost unnoticed. Even as many historians have moved in the right direction by addressing the varied ways in which Virginia's planters were forced to react to everyone from British creditors and King George III to Indians, African slaves, and poor white farmers, a fresh, upper-middling, professional X-factor needs to be incorporated into the debate if historians truly hope to gain a thorough and complete grasp of colonial Virginia's society. Taking all of this into account, *Second Families of Virginia* attempts to fill that historiographical void.

#### Definitions and Methodology

Making clear distinctions between colonial Virginia's planters and their professional counterparts can be a complex task, particularly since many professionals cultivated tobacco and the daily lives of Virginia's bigger tobacco planters were never completely void of the various commercial, military, intellectual, and scientific affairs that eventually constituted professionals' individual occupations. However, when one thoroughly breaks down Virginia's elite planters and professionals, he or she can determine a rather workable separation between the two. For Virginia's great planters, definition and identification are fairly simple if one adheres to a broad, predetermined list of particularly elite FFVs whose prominence and affluence were primarily built upon large-scale plantation management. Labeling upper-middling professionals in Virginia, on the other hand, requires paying closer attention to the nature of colonists' lifestyles, their sociopolitical aspirations, and the logistical components of their specific professions and residency status.

Because the term FFV is a twentieth-century acronym that was unrecognizable to colonial Virginians, one has to first gauge how historians and genealogists have defined and used the term to determine how a suitable, accurate list of the most elite FFV planters might be compiled. On the most basic level, genealogists have implied that in order for a family to warrant FFV status, it would first have to trace its Virginian lineage to either Virginia's formative years in the early seventeenth century (~1607-1640) or the continual immigration of British "Cavaliers" to Virginia several decades after the end of the English Civil War (~1660-1680). Historian, Lyon Gardiner Tyler, on the other hand, claimed that the FFV moniker "obviously had no reference to the early settlers, but to those families who in colonial times were socially prominent and wealthy." He additionally went so far as to claim that the "best test" for identifying FFVs was measuring "continuity of importance" in governmental and military service.<sup>18</sup> Since this study is not so much concerned with investigating who settled in Virginia earliest as it is examining those who wielded major power and influence, some of the financial and political elements that Tyler mentioned must be factored into the equation to whittle the number of FFVs down further.

Just as Carl Bridenbaugh noted how "wealth guarantee[d] status; status convey[ed] privilege, [and] privilege ensure[d] power" in colonial Virginia, one must take into account that Virginia's first major sources of wealth came from planting tobacco.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, when differentiating between the most successful and prominent FFVs and others that only fit the *early settler* portion of the profile, it is imperative to single out those who were the most successful in building large, expansive, and

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<sup>18</sup> Lyon Gardiner Tyler, "The F.F.V.'s of Virginia," *WMQ*, First Series, Vol. 23, (1915), 277.

<sup>19</sup> Bridenbaugh, *Myths and Realities*, 15.

sustainable planting operations. It was they who were able to make the largest fortunes, acquire the most land and slaves, and subsequently foster a tradition of political dominance and intermarriage with other successful families.

Fortunately, Emory Evans compiled a list of at least forty families that met such criteria for his 2009 study, *A Topping People: The Rise and Decline of Virginia's Old Political Elite, 1680-1790*. Using Evans' list as a reliable and tested base, I have added the names of an additional twenty-five elite families for the purposes of identifying persons who most clearly fit the profile of Virginia planter *aristocrats*.<sup>20</sup> Contrarily, since most professionals in colonial Virginia were not directly related to FFVs, only professionals with non-FFV surnames have been examined in this study. The only notable exception to this plan came in the case of *Scotch Tom* Nelson, whose rather exclusive ties to the mercantile profession and later date of immigration to Virginia set him apart from other FFV planters.

Aside from this initial process of FFV elimination, a variety of other elements have also factored into identifying which people in colonial Virginia fit the descriptions of *upper-middling* and/or *professional*. However, it is first imperative to clearly outline the definitions of such terms. A *professional*, in this study, is a person who was engaged in a full-time, specialized occupation outside of tobacco plantation management. Not

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<sup>20</sup> Evans' list of the forty most elite families in colonial Virginia include the following: Armistead, Beverley, Burwell, Byrd, Ballard, Berkeley, Bolling, Bland, Blair, Carter, Corbin, Custis, Cary, Churchill, Claiborne, Cocke, Digges, Eppes, Fitzhugh, Farrar, Fauntleroy, Grymes, Harrison, Jennings, Kemp, Lee, Lewis, Lightfoot, Ludwell, Mason, Nelson, Page, Parke, Randolph, Robinson, Smith, Scarborough, Tayloe, Wormeley, West, and Willis. In conjunction with Lyon Gardiner Tyler's list of FFVs, I have since added the following names to that list: Allerton, Ball, Bassett, Beale, Bray, Bridger, Browne of "Four Mile Tree," Cole, Dawson, Fairfax, Gooch, Littleton, Mathews, Parker of "Isle of Wight Co.," Perry, Poindexter, Spotswood, Thorowgood, Thornton, Taliaferro, Warner, Washington, Whiting, Willoughby, and Yardley. David Hackett Fischer has also compiled a similar list of Virginia families with ties to England's aristocracy and gentry in *Albion's Seed*, 216n.

only do merchants, lawyers, doctors, manufacturers, and surveyors most notably fit this definition, but an assortment of other miscellaneous cases may fall under the heading as well as long as that person's trade, business operations, or military service in some capacity equaled or superseded plantation management activities and provided him with enough income or property to attain an independent, sustainable livelihood.

The term *upper-middling* refers more to one's socioeconomic, educational, and political standing. For example, Virginian colonists of the upper-middling sort were fairly well removed from the ranks of poor farmers since they were financially stable, independent, politically active, and, in some cases, relatively well-educated. However, since they claimed no preexisting ancestral ties to the colony's ruling planter class and tended to assume slightly less high-ranking and influential political roles in the colony's affairs, elite status was still something they initially aspired to.

Furthermore, it should be clarified that while the term *upper-middling professional(s)* is used throughout the study, it is simply a convenient means of intimating where such men generally fit within Virginia's social and occupational hierarchy. It is *not* my intent to suggest that Virginia professionals developed a coherent, shared sense of upper-middling class consciousness in the colonial period. Although it is certain that many professionals were able to deduce their place and standing within the upper-middle realm of colonial Virginia's society, their identities and efforts to advance themselves were not predicated on belonging to an upper-middling group. Rather, such developments were attributable to individual efforts, carried out by men who just so happened to be non-FFV descendants engaged in non-planting professions.

As for the deeper logistical components of such definitions, the methods for identifying a true Virginia professional primarily hinge on three variables. The first concerns the nature, timing, and duration of residency status. Because the study examines a historical trend that predominantly occurred after the beginning of the eighteenth century, only professionals who settled in Virginia from roughly that point forward have been examined herein. These men could, therefore, be naturalized Virginia colonists who only rose to prominence a generation or two after their immigrant families settled in Virginia or non-naturalized European immigrants whose professional credentials allowed them to make more of an instant impact upon arrival. In any event, any professionals referenced in this study were, at least for a prolonged duration, full-time Virginia residents who came to the colony shortly before or after 1700 and were initially not related to any major FFVs.<sup>21</sup>

The second and third identification variables pertain to the level of specialization in one's profession and the priority and timing of said profession in relation to planting. Most, (if not all) of the professionals examined here were, in some form or fashion, engaged in a non-planting occupation that differentiated them from those exclusively tied to managing large plantations. Admittedly, almost all eighteenth-century Virginians, regardless of class, engaged in planting tobacco and many professionals eventually had their own plantations. Yet, the scale, timing, and prioritization of such planting operations were ultimately the greatest factors in figuring out whether they fit within the colony's contingent of professionals.

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<sup>21</sup> Some immigrants who settled in colonial Virginia went through an official naturalization process to become British citizens. However, since a great deal of them did not, I have not viewed naturalization as an essential prerequisite for determining residency status.



Luckily, the interpretations of previous historians have again simplified this process. In cases where earlier historians have identified individuals as men specializing in one profession, such individuals have been assigned that professional status in this study. In instances where historians have labeled individuals as *merchant-planters*, *lawyer-planters*, or *physician-planters*, etc., if further investigation indicated that the men had a deeper and/or previous full-time commitment to a particular profession, they have been viewed as professionals. However, for those other hybrid cases in which men have been more accurately portrayed as *planter-merchants*, *planter-lawyers*, or *planter-physicians*, etc., they have been treated as planters, with no full-time professional commitments.

## CHAPTER II

### RECONCILING THE IRRECONCILABLE IN COLONIAL VIRGINIA: SOCIAL MOBILITY, CLASS EXCLUSIVITY, AND THE DECEPTIVE NATURE OF PLANTER CULTURE

During the mid-to-latter part of the seventeenth century, William Randolph and George Poindexter each set sail for the Royal Colony of Virginia. Although they both exhibited a willingness to work and an even stronger determination to improve their fortunes, neither man had much money or any guarantee of success. In fact, both men's families had endured considerable hardship in the wake of the English Civil War. During the conflict, which raged throughout most of the 1640s, the Randolphs and Poindexters pledged their full support to the King of England, Charles I. Often called *Cavaliers*, these monarchists exercised political and military opposition to Oliver Cromwell and the *Roundheads* who wished to overthrow the King. However, when Charles I was deposed and executed in 1649 and Cromwell commenced a decade of interregnum rule, British subjects who had fought hard to oppose the newly anointed Lord Protector suddenly stood to lose a great deal.<sup>22</sup>

Because the remaining vestiges of England's Cavalier contingent faced economic ruin and an intense climate of fear at home, many were forced to flee for safety and start their lives anew. Seeking refuge outside their hometown of Warwickshire, William Randolph's parents fled to Dublin, Ireland during this initial period of uncertainty and died there before it ended.<sup>23</sup> Around the same time, the Poindexter clan saw its home

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<sup>22</sup> H.J. Eckenrode, *The Randolphs: The Story of a Virginia Family* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company Publishers, 1946), 27-43. "The Poindexter Family," *VMHB*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (April, 1911), 215.

<sup>23</sup> W.G. Stanard, "The Randolph Family," *WMQ*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Oct., 1898), 122.

island of Jersey turn into a de facto sanctuary for both runaway Cavaliers and England's Royal heir, Charles II.<sup>24</sup> Yet, even as Cavalier families like these avoided harm and Charles II eventually assumed the throne after Cromwell's death, numerous fortunes and estates had already been lost or diminished and a long, costly rebuilding process for many loomed on the horizon.<sup>25</sup>

It was within the scope of this rebuilding process that a generation of young Cavalier descendants like William Randolph and George Poindexter chose to join the hodgepodge of broke, but hopeful colonists searching for a fresh start and new fortunes in Virginia. Randolph, who more than a few historians have described as a "poor" immigrant, originally planned to connect with his uncle in Virginia and make his living there as an "undertaker"—the colonial equivalent of a modern-day contractor.<sup>26</sup> Poindexter, who had prior experience in the mercantile and shipping business, saw a golden economic opportunity to better facilitate the tobacco trade between Virginia and England.<sup>27</sup> Like most others who moved to colonial Virginia, the ultimate goals of owning tobacco plantations and slaves undoubtedly held their allure as well. Yet, in the cases of these particular men, two basic realities stood out—Virginia represented a brand new beginning and the journey towards prosperity promised to be an uphill climb.

Despite these foreseeable hurdles, there is ample reason to believe that William Randolph and George Poindexter were not frightened or intimidated. On the contrary,

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<sup>24</sup> "The Poindexter Family," 215-217.

<sup>25</sup> In describing the poor financial situation of William Randolph and others like him, H.J. Eckenrode notes that "the Civil War in England had beggared many prosperous families." Eckenrode, *The Randolphs*, 32.

<sup>26</sup> Although William Randolph's family had been well-to-do members of England's gentry, no one can deny that he initially came to Virginia with little money and no land. See Eckenrode, *The Randolphs*, 31-32; and Jonathan Daniels, *The Randolphs of Virginia*. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1972), 18-19.

<sup>27</sup> "Poindexter Family," 215.

they were probably confident that they would succeed in their new environment.

Particularly since many men of less-than-reputable backgrounds had already shown that there was land to be had and money to be made in Virginia, Randolph and Poindexter had reason to assume that *their* prospects would turn out even brighter. It would undoubtedly require a great deal of work on their parts and their rewards would not come overnight. Yet, while so many other penniless immigrants could claim that they came into Virginia with virtually nothing to their names, the Randolph and Poindexter coats-of-arms quite literally attached an aura of superiority to the names of these two young men.

As historical and genealogical records attest, prior generations of Randolphs and Poindexters were considered members of England's gentry.<sup>28</sup> This class of people, which was, by the late seventeenth century, noticeably diversified by the additions of some rather successful British professionals, occupied a comfortable position between England's middling sort and members of the aristocracy. Although members of the gentry were not *noble* in the English sense of the word, they often held the respected designations of *Gentleman* and *Esquire* and moved in elite social circles. Additionally, while some of the gentry's newer members were ridiculed because they or their forebears had made their initial fortunes through laboring in middle-class, professional fields, their wealth was often substantial enough for them to claim landed status and provide a respectable education for their children.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Daniels, *The Randolphs*, 16. "Poindexter Family," 215.

<sup>29</sup> For the composition and tiers of England's upper-class, see M.L. Bush, *The English Aristocracy: A Comparative Synthesis* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 34-47. For a discussion of how English social customs transferred to the American colonies, see David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) and Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 24-42.

Consequently, it did not often matter how poor or downtrodden men from this group may have been when they came to Virginia, because they still viewed themselves as a cut above most others. In their collective mind's eye, it would only be a matter of time before their innate pedigrees and business acumen would enable them to take advantages of the opportunities Virginia offered and regain the socioeconomic prosperity and political power their families had once enjoyed in England. This class-centric worldview, steeped in a dense amalgam of haughty, Old World culture, was arguably the most sustaining, powerful force that Randolph and Poindexter had working in their favor as they made their way across the Atlantic. And as the experiences of two other Virginia newcomers revealed several decades later, any lofty expectations that William Randolph and Benjamin Poindexter set for themselves in Virginia were not only met in short order, but greatly exceeded in the long run.

In 1738, just before the Quaker and Pennsylvania naturalist John Bartram prepared to visit Virginia and study its native plants, his English friend and fellow Quaker, Peter Collinson, commented on the Randolphs of Virginia. After suggesting that Bartram seek out the hospitality of William Randolph's son Isham, who lived "thirty or forty miles above the falls of the James River," Collinson suggested that Bartram clean up his appearance if he chose to visit.<sup>30</sup> More specifically, Collinson wrote:

One thing I must desire of thee, and do insist that thee must oblige me therein: that though make up that drugget clothes, to go to Virginia in, and not appear to disgrace thyself or me; for though I should not esteem thee the less to come to me in what dress thou wilt, yet these Virginians are a very gentle, well-dressed people, and look, perhaps, more at a man's

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<sup>30</sup> Peter Collinson to John Bartram, 17 February, 1737, London, reprinted in William Darlington, *Memorials of John Bartram and Humphry Marshall, with Notices of their Botanical Contemporaries*. (Philadelphia: C. Sherman Printers, 1849), 89.

outside than his inside. For these and other reasons, pray go very clean, neat, and handsomely dressed to Virginia.<sup>31</sup>

The implications of Collinson's message were explicit. By the eighteenth century, the Randolphs were not only some of the most prominent colonists in Virginia, but as such, they warranted the utmost respect from their neighbors and visitors. Furthermore, as Collinson's emphasis on appearance attests, the Randolphs and their wealthy planter counterparts in Virginia had actually transcended the physical bounds of mainland English society by establishing their own genteel planter culture on colonial British shores. Many years had passed since William Randolph came to Virginia as a poor immigrant. Yet, through a combination of strategic marriage, opportunistic land-grabbing, hard work, and tobacco planting, his sons and their families eventually reaped the rewards of a man who "began life without an acre" and "owned 10,000" at his death.<sup>32</sup> Considering this feat and the immensity of the Randolph legacy in the years that followed, H.J. Eckenrode correctly observed that "there were few stronger or more prescient men in colonial America than William Randolph of Turkey Island."<sup>33</sup>

The Poindexter family was similarly positioned within Virginia's society by the early eighteenth century. In much the same manner that William Randolph improved his family's long-term prospects in Virginia, George Poindexter also set a high standard for his family during the late seventeenth century. After making a modest, 350-acre purchase in Gloucester, near the communal Williamsburg settlement called Middle Plantation, George Poindexter got more involved with planting and shipping tobacco in the years that followed. As a result, he too accumulated substantial holdings by the time

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<sup>31</sup> Darlington, *Memorials of John Bartram*, 89.

<sup>32</sup> Eckenrode, *The Randolphs*, 32-39.

<sup>33</sup> Eckenrode, *The Randolphs*, 32-39.

of his death. Capitalizing on the groundwork that their progenitor had laid, the next generation of Poindexter immigrants wasted little time in expanding the family's plantation holdings. They branched out from the Williamsburg area and established themselves in several parts of New Kent County, both as eminent planters and highly conscientious members of Virginia's ruling class.<sup>34</sup>

In fact, when Welsh immigrant Benjamin Mosby settled in New Kent at the beginning of the eighteenth century and thereafter sought to marry a member of the Poindexter family, he soon learned a very hard lesson about how Virginian *aristocrats* now viewed notions of social mobility. Mosby was the first of his family to make the trek to Virginia; and while several family historians have noted that Mosby "was a man of good education," the fact that he was still "too poor to buy land" forced him into "the business of making shoes."<sup>35</sup> No matter how industrious or commendable Mosby's occupational choice may have been under the circumstances, the young lady's father, Benjamin Poindexter, believed that such tradesmen were not worthy of being accepted into planter ranks. Unwilling to compromise that belief, he adamantly rebuked Mosby's request to wed his daughter, Mary.

When Mosby and Mary Poindexter went "against the wishes of her family," and married anyhow, Benjamin Poindexter went out of his way to publicly disgrace his new son-in-law.<sup>36</sup> Waiting until the day of the wedding celebration, Benjamin Poindexter was said to have "touch[ed] (Mosby) on the shoulder and said to him in the presence of

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<sup>34</sup> "The Poindexter Family (continued)," *VMHB*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (July, 1911), 326-329.

<sup>35</sup> George Brown Goode, *Virginia Cousins: A Study of the Ancestry and Posterity of John Goode of Whitby, a Virginia Colonist of the Seventeenth-Century, with Notes Upon Related Families*, (J.W. Randolph & English, 1887), 220-221.

<sup>36</sup> Goode, *Virginia Cousins*, 221.

company, ‘Eat heartily shoemaker, for it’s all you’ll ever get!’”<sup>37</sup> Although Mosby and his dowerless wife were eventually able to move away to Cumberland County and establish themselves as fairly successful tavern keepers, Poindexter made his point that a man of Mosby’s stature and social aspirations was unwelcome in his world.

In making these familial connections between the Randolphs and Poindexters across a period of roughly half a century, three familiar themes stand out—all of which remain central to the way colonial Virginia’s history is interpreted today. The first has to do with the promises, both real and imagined, that Virginia offered as a land of opportunity. As the immigration of convicts, middling fortune-seekers, military adventurers, Cavalier refugees, and disentailed second sons all suggest, the argument that Virginia was a desirable destination for fresh starts and moneymaking opportunities is convincing. Certainly, many who came to Virginia in the colonial period never realized great financial success or social mobility. Yet, for every few who did not benefit from settling in the colony, there was often someone else who did.

The second and third themes, which appear technically incongruent with the first, concern the stratified, planter-dominant hierarchy that existed in colonial Virginia, as well as the culture of gentility and exclusivity that accompanied it. As so many historians have argued, the majority of wealth and political power throughout colonial Virginia’s history was almost always controlled by a relatively small group of families whose primary income came from planting.<sup>38</sup> Granted, these families did not all come to

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<sup>37</sup> Goode, *Virginia Cousins*, 221.

<sup>38</sup> Fischer, *Albion’s Seed*. Fischer notes that “the hegemony of Virginia’s first families was exceptionally strong through the first century of that colony’s history,” 224. For similar commentaries on how that hegemony carried over into eighteenth-century Virginia’s society, see Sydnor, *Gentlemen Freeholders*, Carl Bridenbaugh, *Myths and Realities: Societies of the Colonial South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State



Virginia at the same time, and they were not all descended from identical backgrounds. Some had the benefit of simply settling in Virginia early, during the most opportune periods of the first tobacco boom. Other latecomers, who could boast even more illustrious Old World pedigrees than their predecessors, simply immigrated to the colony because they faced difficult or desperate circumstances by staying in England. Yet, regardless of whatever minor differences these FFVs may have had, they ultimately shared one very important thing in common over the long term—the combination of land ownership, tobacco planting, intermarriage, and political power made them all wealthy patriarchs of their own domain.

Moreover, as these planters and their kin soon realized a mutual interest in maintaining the status quo, they made it a point to forge a culture in Virginia that would ensure their continued dominance. Part of this cultural process involved practical things like preserving wealth through intermarriage with fellow planter families and maintaining political power through various acts of patronage. Other cultural practices, more noticeably artificial in nature, included everything from building large plantation residences in the style of English country homes and acquiring valuable consumer goods to wearing the latest English fashions and observing arrogant codes of social deference and gentility. Together, with the wealth that tobacco provided, these cultural manifestations of planter power helped forge a dual sense of aristocratic legitimacy and hierarchical order in the minds of Virginia planters and their neighbors.

In terms of both logic and supporting primary evidence, each of the aforementioned interpretations has its merits. However, a glaring inconsistency between

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University Press, 1952), and Jack P. Greene, *Political Life in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1986).

the two extremes still begs an equally obvious question: if colonial Virginia reflected characteristics of both an open and closed society, which interpretation is ultimately more representative of the society writ large? This question, which has elicited numerous and complicated responses over time, is just as important as it is far-reaching. Indeed, for most any student of American history, it is one of the most fundamental questions confronted when studying the colonial South.

However, despite the fact that historians have offered a number of complex and diverse answers to the question, there is a subtle problem with the question itself. Because the question assumes no reconcilable middle ground, one seems forced from the outset to make one of three definitive choices on the true nature of Virginia society. Either colonial Virginia was an open, dynamic place that continually offered new opportunities to fortune seekers; a highly stratified environment where non-elite outsiders were continually forced to kowtow to wealthy *aristocratic* planters; or a society that was open only until the moment that planters noticeably began to establish themselves as the colony's elite power brokers.

As the overwhelming images of genteel planter-patriarchs, grand tobacco estates, slaves, and poor white farmers have cast immense shadows over colonial Virginia's historiography, most historians have indicated that the latter of these three interpretations is most accurate. In fact, most references to colonial Virginia being a land of opportunity for white men of varying social backgrounds seem to be either relegated to the early seventeenth century or interpreted as exceptional instances in the periods thereafter.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> See Bernard Bailyn, "Politics and Social Structure in Virginia," in T.H. Breen, ed., *Shaping Southern Society: The Colonial Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 197; Bridenbaugh, *Myths and Realities*, 13.

Furthermore, because such exceptional references are almost always juxtaposed with or contextualized within the broader framework of a stable, planter-dominated society, they assume more of a subsidiary, supporting role in the story of colonial and Revolutionary Virginia.

There is a problem, however, with wholly accepting this interpretation. As a number of past and present historians have collectively demonstrated, colonial Virginia's society—despite its hierarchical customs—did exhibit more than a few deceptively open and democratic characteristics.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, many of these same historians and their followers have further identified significant elements of paradox, inconsistency, and fear in the ways that Virginia planters defined themselves, adapted to various contingencies, and disseminated their culture.<sup>41</sup> Considering that these observations call into question numerous assumptions within the aforementioned planter-dominant paradigm, it hardly seems fair to assign them subsidiary or exceptional status in Virginia's historical narrative when ultimately, they are just collectively undervalued.

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<sup>40</sup> Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, *The Shaping of Colonial Virginia* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1958), Charles Sydnor, *Gentlemen Freeholders: Political Practices in Washington's Virginia* (Williamsburg: Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1952) Sydnor specifically stated that "Eighteenth-century Virginia did not regard aristocracy and democracy as contradictory forms of government," 60. Also see Jack P. Greene, "Foundations of Power in the Virginia House of Burgesses, 1720-1776," *Shaping Southern Society*, ed. Breen, 219.

<sup>41</sup> Several notable works that address the topic of planters' problems and insecurities include Michael J. Rozbicki, *The Complete Colonial Gentleman: Cultural Legitimacy in Plantation America* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1998), Woody Holton, *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), Edmund Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1975), Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), Anthony Parent Jr., *Foul Means: The Formation of a Slave Society in Virginia, 1660-1740* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), Emory Evans, "*A 'Topping People': The Rise and Decline of Virginia's Old Political Elite, 1680-1790*," (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), Albert H. Tillson, Jr., *Accommodating Revolutions: Virginia's Northern Neck in an Era of Transformation, 1760-1810*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010).

For a more specific point-of-reference on this issue, consider how central the themes of planter dominance and social exclusivity remain to the standard narrative of colonial and Revolutionary Virginia. For the period following the early hardships of the Jamestown settlement, historians like James Henretta have argued that by 1630, “the colonists in Virginia had created a flourishing tobacco economy and a stable English-style local polity, controlled by landed gentlemen sitting as justices of the peace.”<sup>42</sup> Although large wilderness tracts constituted many of their landholdings and their lifestyles were crude in comparison to later generations, these landed gentlemen nevertheless ran large tobacco plantations, controlled Virginia’s Council, and set an important *ruling class* precedent for future planters moving forward. Subsequently, the assumption one is led to draw is that the nature of colonial Virginia’s society became closed and exclusive fairly quickly, particularly as these first-generation planters increasingly imposed their will on their lesser neighbors.

In discussing the subsequent part of the seventeenth century in which Virginia’s tobacco economy skyrocketed and more profit-seekers poured into the colony, historians like David Hackett Fischer, Lorena Walsh, and Edmund Morgan have lent further strength to the traditional planter-class paradigm.<sup>43</sup> Granted, their studies have independently addressed different topics in colonial Virginia. Yet, the collective emphasis of their conclusions still ultimately rest with how planters in this period consolidated their power and wealth, established an economic system predicated on

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<sup>42</sup> James A. Henretta, David Brody, Lynn Dumenil, and Susan Ware, *America’s History, Volume I: to 1877*, Fifth Edition (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2004), 50.

<sup>43</sup> Fischer, *Albion’s Seed*; Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*; Lorena Walsh, *Motives of Honor, Pleasure, and Profit: Plantation Management in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1607-1763*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010)

bound labor and dependency, and cultivated pronounced modes of social deference and racial degradation.

Fischer, for instance, has argued that during the mid-to-latter part of the seventeenth century, a new group of downtrodden Cavalier refugees and disentailed sons of the gentry supplanted some of the preexisting members of Virginia's ruling class on the basis of their illustrious pedigrees alone. In fact, no matter how much social ridicule and/or financial ruin many of these men had previously experienced in England, Fischer takes issue with the idea that they were anything less than elite. Consequently, Fischer's argument is one of cultural transference, whereby the seeds of England's hierarchical customs were simply shipped across the Atlantic and planted in Virginia's tobacco-rich soil.<sup>44</sup>

Morgan, more attuned to the mixed nature and generational overlap of Virginia's planter class, has pointed out how the class-driven, white uprising led by Nathaniel Bacon catalyzed the efforts of both old and newer planters to strengthen their preexisting hold on the colony. Claiming that the majority of Virginia's wealthy planters were subliminally haunted by the potential for another such uprising, Morgan contends that they henceforth began to work together in the interest of racial and economic solidarity. More specifically, they started to more actively embrace black slavery, phase out indentured servitude, and adopt a more democratic, paternalistic attitude towards their poorer white neighbors.<sup>45</sup> When such arguments are coupled with Walsh's observation that Chesapeake planters already knew about slavery's long-term profitability before

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<sup>44</sup> Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, 207-232.

<sup>45</sup> Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*

Bacon's Rebellion, all indicators suggest that by roughly 1680, Virginia was more closed-off, hierarchical, and planter-dominated than ever before.<sup>46</sup>

Needless to say, when Virginia's historical narrative reaches the dawn of the eighteenth century, the golden age of the colony's planter *aristocracy* seems an almost forgone conclusion. As many have observed, the colony's great planters in this period began to cement their dominant legacy in earnest by building grander plantation homes, managing even larger slave labor forces, consuming lavishly, and emulating the manners and sociopolitical customs of the English aristocracy.<sup>47</sup> In fact, Woody Holton has contended that this position of dominance in Virginia society became so great that many planters eventually considered it something worth dying for.<sup>48</sup>

By the 1770s, when British colonial rule presented Virginians with a host of troubling socioeconomic, political, and racial problems at home, the potential for such issues to jeopardize planters' dominance prompted the colony's elites to make a bold move. Risking their lives and fortunes, Virginia's great planters reticently led their fellow colonists into the American Revolution in hopes that independence from Great Britain would ultimately enable them to freely regain their former sense of supreme control.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, as Holton, Terry Bouton, and Gordon Wood have argued, after the war was over, more than a few Virginia planters attempted to fulfill these hopes by helping to draft and support a Constitution which—despite its outward adherence to liberty and

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<sup>46</sup> Walsh, *Motives of Honor, Pleasure, and Profit*

<sup>47</sup> Henretta, Brody, Dumernil, and Ware, *America's History*, 90-91.

<sup>48</sup> Holton, *Forced Founders*

<sup>49</sup> Holton, *Forced Founders*

equality—was initially meant to keep most of the old elitist order intact and control the democratic excesses brought on by the Revolution.<sup>50</sup>

On first glance, this synthesized narrative, replete with the influences of both longstanding and recent scholarship, appears rather complete and accurate. It clearly addresses the origins and development of Virginia's planter society, as well as the most significant people and events that guided its evolution over the *longue duree*. To a certain degree, the narrative is also sensitive to some unstable aspects of Virginia's society, the conscious means by which planters constructed and expressed their culture, and how paradoxical the actions and beliefs of such planters could often be. However, as comprehensive as the narrative is, its overall analysis remains somewhat problematic since it stops just short of considering whether all the instances of planter instability, paradox, and cultural construction in Virginian society actually outweigh the efficacy of the traditional planter paradigm. Subsequently, the story of how a legitimate, stable, and *aristocratic* planter society remained largely closed and intact through a series of transformations still remains front and center.

This critical observation is, by no means, intended to imply that the greater points expressed in this narrative are entirely wrong. However, the criticism is intended to suggest that a few modifications to the narrative's basic framework could make it even more accurate than it currently stands. Certainly, Virginia's great planters possessed more than enough wealth, status, and political power to warrant the dominant characterizations so many historians have assigned to them. Yet, when one also

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<sup>50</sup> Woody Holton, *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), Terry Bouton, *Taming Democracy: "The People," The Founders, and the Troubled Ending of the American Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) Also see Wood, *Radicalism*, 229-369.

considers the class-neutral determinants that initially factored into so much of planters' success in Virginia, the disingenuous underpinnings of their *aristocratic* culture, and their propensity to adapt their elitist behaviors to changing circumstances, it becomes clear that elite planters were not always what they seemed to be in colonial Virginia.

To begin with, the vast majority of Virginia's tobacco fortunes were not initially inherited, but created by men who started out with relatively modest means and/or damaged Old World reputations. Consequently, even the former members of the English gentry, whose financial ruin prompted them to pursue planting options in Virginia, were not much different than less-distinguished fortune seekers who also became successful Virginia planters. Furthermore, the fact that white men of various social backgrounds could gain financial success and social standing in the colony with little more than an opportunity, a valuable skill-set, and some hard work never really went away. In other words, colonial Virginia was and remained a *relatively* open society from day one.

Naturally, as Virginia's elite planter families realized sustained financial success across multiple generations, they repeatedly attempted to make such truths disappear by imposing an *aristocratic* culture on their society and monopolizing most economic opportunities for themselves. And to most outsiders looking in, their efforts were largely successful by the beginning of the eighteenth century. It is undeniable, for instance, that Virginia colonists of all backgrounds eventually acknowledged the existence of a planter-driven, socioeconomic hierarchy and acted accordingly. Likewise, it is indisputable that a variety of hierarchical customs and values proved pivotal in both shaping the ideologies of Virginia's leaders and guiding the course of the colonies' and Commonwealth's histories. However, when one begins to question where such hierarchical mores



originated, when they materialized, who was most instrumental in creating and implementing them in Virginia, and why those men went to such great lengths to do so, then many of the assumptions surrounding the exclusive and aristocratic character of Virginia's plantocracy become more complicated.

Since this study ultimately seeks to illustrate how various eighteenth-century Virginia professionals successfully managed to navigate through this web of socioeconomic complexity, significant attention will be devoted to them in due course. However, because professionals were not the first to reap socioeconomic rewards in Virginia, the planters who represented the first wave of economic success and social distinction deserve their own consideration within this modified narrative. Additionally, as the timing and nature of professionals' emergence in Virginia forced planters to make one of many adjustments to their seemingly static social customs, it also makes sense to further dissect the most fundamental tenets of those customs and determine what exactly made them so susceptible to change.

This chapter intends to analyze the diverse composition of Virginia's planter class and the equally complicated culture that its members formulated and disseminated. More specifically, it links together some scattered observations that historians have made on four loosely related topics: the illegitimate origins and deceptively open nature of colonial Virginia's planter *aristocracy*; the built-in professional sensibilities of the planter class; the centrality of imagining and acting in planter culture; and the ways in which all of these things gradually softened the foundations of planter dominance and prompted more fluidity and change over time within elite Virginia society.

By giving such preliminary treatment to colonial Virginia's planter class, the greater intent is to shed light on two fundamental realities which had subsequent ramifications for eighteenth-century professionals. The first is that well before professionals arrived on the scene, Virginia's great planters already knew what it meant to be consummate actors and adaptors in a less-than-stable, open society. Although planters' exclusive attitudes and actions may have outwardly suggested that they had always held complete and rightful control over a closed-off, hierarchical society, they were never quite able to create the stable, legitimate aristocracy they envisioned. In fact, the planter class's influence over the rest of Virginia's society was largely based on artificial forms of cultural expression that were often quite tenuous. The second argument is that by the time planters decided to actively fight such instability and make Virginia into a true, aristocratic English society, too many contrary forces were already at work to make such a change complete. As a result, planters were forced, time and again, to temper their expectations and yield to the same relatively open components of the colony that had ironically allowed their own family members' successes.

With regard to Virginia's planter aristocracy, many historians have viewed the group's composition and overall character as the byproduct of a greater British cultural process—one by which legitimate members of England's upper class superimposed an exclusive Old World hierarchy onto Virginia.<sup>51</sup> According to such historians, this process was primarily instigated in the mid-to-late seventeenth century by the Cavalier descendants of well-connected English families and the younger sons of England's gentry

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<sup>51</sup> One of the most recent arguments in support of this "transplanting" interpretation is in Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, 207-232. For some other older works that articulate similar arguments, see Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: The Colonial Experience* (New York: Random House, 1958), 97-142 and Louis B. Wright, *The First Gentlemen of Virginia: Intellectual Qualities of the Early Colonial Ruling Class* (Charlottesville, 1940)

who came to Virginia because primogeniture prevented them from inheriting any family property. Most of these men, like William Randolph and George Poindexter, relied solely on their gentry status and family connections to overcome initial financial difficulties. Meanwhile, a few, who were fortunate enough to amass some start-up capital before coming to Virginia, made an even more immediate impression upon arrival.<sup>52</sup> These immigrants forged a sense of class solidarity among one another, became *aristocratic* Virginia planters in quick fashion, and subsequently began to stunt the socioeconomic mobility of any future outsiders.

Although some historians, like Bernard Bailyn, have identified strands of openness and instability in Virginia's society before the late seventeenth century, their long-term conclusions still tend to coincide with the belief that England's closed-off, hierarchical system was naturally transferred to Virginia between 1645 and 1675. Bailyn, for instance, concedes that in early seventeenth-century Virginia, "rank had its privileges . . . but rank itself was unstable and the lines of class and status were fluid."<sup>53</sup> However, Bailyn's observation was primarily intended to contrast Virginia's earliest, more rustic planter-elites with the late seventeenth-century *aristocratic* immigrants who later altered that state of affairs. Thus, instead of considering what the two groups had in common, namely little money and an open, opportune environment for profit and advancement, Bailyn's greater argument remains fixed on the more artificial, cultural differences between the first two successful generations of Virginia immigrants.

Bailyn's assessment of five particularly influential seventeenth-century Virginia planters exemplifies this stance. In analyzing the experiences of Samuel Mathews,

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<sup>52</sup> Peter Laslett, "The Gentry of Kent in 1640," in Breen, ed., *Shaping Southern Society*, 45.

<sup>53</sup> Bailyn, "Politics and Social Structure in Virginia," in Breen, ed., *Shaping Southern Society*, 197.

George Menefie, John Utie, Abraham Wood, and William Spencer, Bailyn admits that each man owned considerable amounts of property in Virginia and wielded substantial political power as well. However, he is equally quick to point out that such developments took place prior to the Restoration and the subsequent wave of elite Virginia immigration that followed. Furthermore, because men like Mathews, Menefie, Utie, Wood, and Spencer had risen from an array of disadvantaged circumstances, (some had previously been servants or yeoman farmers) Bailyn insists that no matter how wealthy they became, they still lacked the proper social backgrounds and political experience to constitute a true ruling class. Therefore, while Bailyn declares that such “tough, unsentimental, quick tempered, (and) crudely ambitious” men “succeeded not because of, but despite whatever gentility they may have had,” he also implies that within the greater comparative context of Virginia’s planter *aristocracy*, the social rank of such men was illegitimate and their successes were relatively exceptional.<sup>54</sup>

However, the studies of T.J. Wertenbaker and Martin Quitt prove that too much faith has often been placed in the assumption that the Virginia’s great planters were all legitimate, well-connected members of England’s gentry. In fact, Wertenbaker’s early-twentieth-century work, *Patrician and Plebeian in Virginia*, thoroughly challenges the assumption that most progenitors of Virginia’s planter *aristocracy* were even elite in the first place.<sup>55</sup> Careful not to go too far with his assertions, Wertenbaker does admit that there were more than a few Virginia families like the Wyatts, Peytons, Lees, Throckmortons, Pages, Burwells, and Lightfoots, etc. who did come from solid, elite

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<sup>54</sup> Bailyn, “Politics and Social Structure,” 197.

<sup>55</sup> Thomas J. Wertenbaker, *Patrician and Plebeian in Virginia or the Origin and Development of the Social Classes of the Old Dominion* (1910), reprinted in Wertenbaker, *Shaping of Colonial Virginia*, 1-237.

backgrounds in England.<sup>56</sup> Yet, at the same time, he presents an equally compelling case that such wealthy and well-connected immigrants were, more often than not, the exceptions to the rule.

To begin with, Wertenbaker considers the entire seventeenth century in his analysis, not just the mid-to-late period associated with the immigration of the English gentry. Consequently, when he identifies the planter families who had established the most dominance in Virginia by the beginning of the eighteenth century, his sample is more sensitive to the cross section of power and social relations that culminated between earlier and later planter generations. Particularly since Bailyn and others have noted that many of the late-seventeenth-century FFV immigrants benefited from marriages into preexisting planter families and/or the prior cultivation and development of Virginia's choicest lands, this is a sound consideration to make when analyzing the Virginia's planter *aristocracy* in its entirety.<sup>57</sup>

What Wertenbaker subsequently determines is that minus a few truly elite exceptions in the latter period, most of the planters who constituted Virginia's ruling class by the eighteenth century actually fell into one of three less illustrious categories. In one group, there were the long-term descendants of Virginia's first successful planters—men whose fathers or grandfathers had successfully gained land, money, and political power in the earlier periods of Virginia's settlement despite their poor backgrounds and lack of education. The second group, which Wertenbaker identifies as the most populous, was descended from middling merchants and tradesmen. In many cases, such men's fathers had made respectable livings, but their earnings were not

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<sup>56</sup> Wertenbaker, *Patrician and Plebeian*, 27.

<sup>57</sup> Bailyn, "Politics and Social Structure," 201.

substantial enough to warrant landed gentry status or provide multiple inheritances.

Relatively speaking, therefore, their backgrounds were more middle-class than anything else. Even within Wertenbaker's last group, which primarily consisted of Cavalier supporters and a variety of other Restoration refugees, he refuses to blindly accept all members of this group as elite.<sup>58</sup> Referencing an editorial remark from *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Wertenbaker pointed to the following conclusion to back his stance:

If the talk of Virginia Cavaliers indicates an idea that most of the Virginia gentry were descended from men of high rank, who had adhered to the King's side and afterwards emigrated to Virginia, it is assuredly incorrect. Some members of distinguished families, a considerable number of the minor gentry, as well as persons of the lower ranks, after the success of a party which they believe to be composed of rebels and traitors, came to Virginia, finding here a warm welcome and leaving many descendants.<sup>59</sup>

Martin Quitt lends even greater support to some of Wertenbaker's arguments. In examining several instances where Virginia immigrants did come from wealthy English families, Quitt notes that many of them were either desperately running from financial problems in England or they had been disinherited because of familial disputes. In the cases of FFV immigrants William Fitzhugh and Miles Cary, for instance, Quitt uses the contents of various letters and wills to deduce that neither man really wished to maintain a serious connection with his family members in England even though each of their families was prosperous. Equally intriguing is the fact that these examples represent just the tip of the iceberg. As Quitt delves even deeper into the difficult family issues

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<sup>58</sup> Wertenbaker, *Patrician and Plebeian*. Also see, Bridenbaugh, *Myths and Realities*. Bridenbaugh states that "The most significant feature of the Chesapeake aristocracy was its middle-class origin. Middle and lower-class Englishmen had laid the foundations for it in the previous century, as it is well known, and their descendants worked to give it luster in succeeding years," 12.

<sup>59</sup> *Barons of the Potomac and Rappahannock* by Moncure D. Conway, Review, *VMHB*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (October, 1893), 215.

experienced by many other less privileged, but successful Virginia planters, he concludes that when all of these experiences are analyzed together, they “prove a rule about Virginia immigrant leaders: many came in varying degrees of estrangement from their English families.”<sup>60</sup>

Going a step further, Quitt argues that the disconnect between so many notable Virginia immigrants and the British society they left behind proved critical in the subsequent shaping of colonial Virginia society. Only in this case, the story is a bit different. Instead of immediately attempting to superimpose an exclusive, English-style hierarchy onto Virginia’s society, Quitt observes that these immigrants looked at Virginia as a clean slate on which they could create their own new, hybrid set of values and customs. As a result, “their attachment to Anglicanism, the crown, or gentility was subordinate to their preoccupation with work, their need for material independence, their concern for providing adequately for *each* of their own sons, and a commitment to personal autonomy.”<sup>61</sup> So, even as some historians have constantly assumed an innate difference between Virginia’s FFV progenitors and the host of other immigrants that came to Virginia both before and after their arrival, Quitt demonstrates that, at least in terms of what they fundamentally valued and sought to gain in Virginia, the two groups were not that different from each other.

Admittedly, as time went on and more tobacco fortunes were made, planters did develop an enhanced desire to consolidate wealth and power. Moreover, the sons of many late-seventeenth-century immigrants became exceedingly consumed with ruling

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<sup>60</sup> Martin H. Quitt, “Immigrant Origins of the Virginia Gentry: A Study of Cultural Transmission and Innovation,” *WMQ*, Third Series, Vol. 45, No. 4 (October, 1988), 633.

<sup>61</sup> Quitt, “Immigrant Origins,” 631.

over Virginia, choking off social mobility, and distinguishing themselves as true representatives of an English aristocracy. However, Virginia had already fulfilled the hopes and promises of too many fortune seekers by that time to suddenly shed the open characteristics that originally defined its society. On the contrary, Jack Greene notes that underneath all the hierarchical customs that planters attempted to strengthen during the early-to-mid eighteenth century, there were still plenty of times when the true nature of Virginia's society shone through. Acknowledging that "many, like Speaker John Holloway, John Clayton, and James Power acquired wealth, position, and political power without the advantages of connections with older families," Greene argues such experiences signaled "that social lines were still fluid and that political power was still attainable for the ambitious and gifted among the newly arrived."<sup>62</sup>

Parts of the primary record also speak directly to these points, especially in cases where British citizens openly mocked the composition and practices of Virginia's planter *aristocracy*. Carol Shammass has pointed out that as early as the seventeenth century, when the participants in Bacon's Rebellion were characterized by Virginians as an unruly mob of poor white farmers, English observers teased their Virginia counterparts by noting that the mob's leader—Nathaniel Bacon—was ironically the most legitimate version of aristocrat that the colony of Virginia could muster.<sup>63</sup> Michael Rozbicki further notes that by the beginning of the eighteenth century, most English elites "had fairly well crystallized ideas about the colonial gentry [in Virginia]. At their core lay the belief that

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<sup>62</sup> Greene, "Foundations," 219.

<sup>63</sup> Carol Shammass, "English-Born and Creole Elites in Turn-of-the-Century Virginia," in Thad W. Tate and David L. Ammerman, eds., *The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth-Century: Essays on Anglo-American Society*, 274-278.



it was virtually impossible that such a class could have legitimate claims to gentility.”<sup>64</sup> Even as late as the 1760s and 1770s, when tensions heightened between the Mother Country and its American colonies, it was common for British newspaper editorials to characterize Virginia’s planter class as a bastard aristocracy.

For example, at the height of the Stamp Act Crisis of the 1760s, a person writing under the pseudonym of Pacificus said a number of derogatory things in *The London Gazette and Daily Advertiser* about upstart Virginian rebels and the misguided pretensions they engaged in by advertising themselves as true gentlemen and men of honor. After Pacificus stated that the American colonies could never win a war with Great Britain because Virginians lacked “chivalry” and were hardly even fit “for an engagement with our Covent Garden ladies,” one angry American decided to categorically respond to the remarks.<sup>65</sup> In doing so, however, he ended up revealing an even longer, more detailed list of nasty sentiments that had been hurled at Virginians for over a century.

After expressing his fury with British impudence over the Stamp Act, the responder voiced particular displeasure with the fact that Virginians were viewed so widely in Great Britain as “the vilest of mankind, as profligates, as rebels—as being the offspring of convicts and the gleanings of the gaols of Great Britain and Ireland.”<sup>66</sup> Of course, these notions of a convict aristocracy in Virginia were far-fetched and exaggerated. Yet, by the same token, British observers were wise enough to realize that with very few people of true, aristocratic status living in Virginia, the colony’s planters

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<sup>64</sup> Rozbicki, *The Complete Colonial Gentleman*, 77.

<sup>65</sup> *The Boston Post Boy*, Boston, Massachusetts, 10 February, 1766, Issue 443, Pg. 2, reprinted from original in the *London Gazeteer and Daily Advertiser*

<sup>66</sup> *Providence Gazette*, Providence, Rhode Island, 23 August, 1766, Vol. III, Issue 137, Page 1.

had seemingly created their own unique *aristocracy* out of thin air. As far as English onlookers were concerned, the entire hierarchical order of the colony and its genteel customs were far more pretentious than legitimate.

Noting how Virginia planters also established some rather broad and forgiving parameters for defining themselves as landed, independent men of leisure, Gordon Wood has illustrated yet another way in which assumptions of aristocratic legitimacy and Old World transference in Virginia could often be weaker than advertised. In Wood's survey of American society prior to the American Revolution, he generally concludes that Virginia's great planters (as well as elites in most other colonies) championed the beliefs that work equaled dependence and that it was beneath the station of an aristocratic gentlemen to actually work for a living. Yet, a closer look at some of Wood's sources show that there were plenty of built-in exceptions to such rules, particularly for those who worked or had once worked in middle-class professional fields like law, medicine, education, and commerce. Daniel Defoe's definition of the gentry, for example, included those "who live on estates, and without the mechanism of employment, including the men of letters, such as clergy, lawyers and physicians."<sup>67</sup> Wood further notes that while merchants were often ridiculed for serving their own self-interests, exceptions were often made for them too since they constituted such an indispensable and important part of the greater economic system.<sup>68</sup>

Given Wertenbaker's observations on the origins of Virginia's *aristocracy*, the fact that such concessions were ultimately made in Virginian circles should not come as a

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<sup>67</sup> Daniel Defoe, quoted in W.A. Speck, *Stability and Strife: England, 1714-1760*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 32.

<sup>68</sup> Wood, *Radicalism*, 36-39.

surprise. Despite whatever ideas some have about one landed aristocracy transferring to another, almost all of the immigrant planters who could be viewed as FFVs by the beginning of the eighteenth century had at least some connection to England's middle-class professions, especially the mercantile profession. Even in the cases of the more well-to-do immigrants whose families were solidly entrenched in England's gentry, such status was still often tied to the fact that the family's first successful forebear was only able to become landed by first earning the proceeds of a major professional fortune. Given such circumstances, a planter who honestly denounced professional livelihoods as inferior was, in all likelihood, only denouncing his own elite stature. While it is certain that Virginia planters outwardly rattled on with scorn about work and trade, they inwardly held a certain appreciation for professions, even if they thought it ungentelemanly to practice them full-time.

Additionally, as Virginia's *aristocrats* pursued numerous side-projects outside plantation management, this appreciation for professionals was not just something planters invoked to validate the legitimacy of their own origins. On the contrary, the appreciation was cultivated firsthand. Because so many of Virginia's great planters lacked the property (and rental income) to become truly landed when they first came to the colony, they had to learn to step outside the domain of their plantations and become more proficient at mastering the skills of multiple professions. Among other things, a working knowledge of law, commerce, surveying, medicine, and/or manufacturing were things that could particularly enhance one's overall chances at building a sustainable estate. Consequently, the process that one had to go through in order to be a successful

plantation owner and slave master during the late-seventeenth and early eighteenth century was a profession in and of itself.<sup>69</sup>

Again, planters attempted to rationalize this deficiency as a legitimate part of their *aristocratic* culture. They wrote off part-time, professional tasks as the necessary business of overseeing and improving their estates, and they continued to reflect negatively on others who had to earn their income through actual work. However, between planters' real-life efforts to produce extra income and all the trouble they went through to make it seem as if their elevated positions and tobacco plantations were the result of hereditary title, not hard work, they were arguably (and ironically) working just as much as anyone else.<sup>70</sup>

The fact that planters eventually became so obsessed with assuming elite appearances also sheds invaluable light on the illegitimate, unstable, and paradoxical character of Virginia's planter *aristocracy*. For while numerous Virginia planters of humble origins successfully defied whatever strands of deference and exclusivity the colony inherited from England in its early years, later members of the planter class—especially by the beginning of the eighteenth century—went out of their way to make it seem like such traditions had always been in place. While several historians like Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm, T.H. Breen, Richard Bushman, and Michal Rozbicki have pinpointed the importance of *imagining*, *inventing*, and *performing* in both

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<sup>69</sup> For some analyses on how Virginia's gentlemen planters diversified their estates through part-time dedication to non-planting occupations, see Laura Croghan Kamoie, *Irons in the Fire: The Business History of the Tayloe Family, 1700-1860* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), A.G. Roeber, *Faithful Magistrates and Republican Lawyers: Creators of Virginia's Legal Culture, 1680-1810* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), and Sarah S. Hughes, *Surveyors and Statesmen: Land Measuring in Colonial Virginia* (Virginia Surveyor's Foundation: Virginia Association of Surveyors, 1979)

<sup>70</sup> Bridenbaugh, *Myths and Realities*

the general formulation and perpetuation of culture, it is worth considering how such findings have been or could be applied to an analysis of colonial Virginian society.<sup>71</sup>

In a strictly theoretical sense, the culture of Virginia's planter *aristocracy* is perhaps best understood as the byproduct of a formulaic process—one in which the carefully constructed *mentalites* and invented traditions of planters were carried out on the stage of an “imagined community.”<sup>72</sup> Despite the fact that Virginia's planters did not all know each other personally, they did recognize a common set of traits, needs, and desires among each other. Subsequently, they appropriated such strands of commonality as their own and used them to forge a clear form of identification. Thus, in the same way that Benedict Anderson has viewed nation-states as “imagined political communities” where similar processes coincide to produce various forms of nationalism, the same sort of thing can be applied to the world that Virginia's great planters imagined for themselves.<sup>73</sup>

With this broader, imaginative framework in place, planters could then invent specific traditions and customs capable of strengthening their identity and position within their society—something that Eric Hobsbawm is quite familiar with. Although Hobsbawm's works do not specifically concern colonial Virginia, his observations on the invention of traditions seem particularly appropriate to apply to Virginia's planter culture. As Hobsbawm has noted, societies throughout history have almost always recognized or

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<sup>71</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (New York: Verso, 1991); Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition*, 20<sup>th</sup> edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); T.H. Breen, *Tobacco Culture: The Mentality of the Great Tidewater Planters on the Eve of Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992); Rozbicki, *The Complete Colonial Gentleman*

<sup>72</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

<sup>73</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

observed a host of regular traditions. Many such traditions are explicitly designed to reflect something unique about the people that founded the tradition or impart an important message to those who continue to honor it. However, many such traditions are not thousand-year-old testaments of irrefutable historical truths, but rather much younger manifestations of how people, in a given time and place, wished to view themselves. Consequently, when one starts to break down the traditions, customs, and practices that are inherently accepted as part of the natural order, it becomes clear that a rather large dose of invention often factors into both the shaping of societies and how people within those societies define themselves.<sup>74</sup>

In the case of Virginia's planter aristocracy, Hobsbawm's conclusions ring especially true. T.H. Breen, for instance, offers considerable insight on the inventive components of Virginia's society in his study concerning the collective mentality of great planters in eighteenth-century Virginia. While examining how Virginia's wealthiest planters viewed their existence and internalized their complicated network of socioeconomic and political relations, Breen argues that tobacco was the axis upon which everything turned. Because of tobacco's profitability and its connections to plantation life and mastery, planters grew sentimentally attached to their fields and the sweet-scented leaves their slaves grew and tended. Furthermore, because tobacco had enabled Virginia planters to become the most dominant members of their society, tobacco planting became synonymous with gentlemanly status. Therefore, as this sort of mentality engendered strict codes of gentility, honor, and class obligation among

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<sup>74</sup> Hobsbawm and Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition*, 1-14.

gentleman planters, it became a crucial factor in helping to give Virginia the appearance of a unique, hierarchical society.<sup>75</sup>

The works of Richard Bushman and Michal Rozbicki have also highlighted critical modes of invention central to Virginia's planter culture. In discussing the numerous dimensions of gentility in colonial America, Bushman argues that as many wealthy American colonists sought new, tangible ways to separate themselves from their neighbors, they ultimately focused much of their attention on becoming more refined in their behaviors and consumer tastes. As a result, one's ability to perfect his or her performance in certain social settings eventually became just as important as being elite in the first place. Furthermore, as Bushman examines the construction of grand homes in eighteenth-century America and the conspicuous consumption of luxury goods that the wealthy enjoyed, he astutely observes that such indulgences had a dual purpose. On one hand, they provided a sense of comfort and pleasure for those who could afford them. On the other hand, they also served to remind those who could not afford them that innate class regulations were the natural, guiding forces of society and that all should know their place and act accordingly.<sup>76</sup> In either case, whether Virginia's planters found themselves practicing genteel behavior or building grand manor houses, they were essentially taking an active part in inventing a large, tangible part of their overall image.

Rozbicki, who examines the process of cultural legitimization in colonial Virginia, adds another intriguing wrinkle to this conversation on invention and imagination. More specifically, Rozbicki observes that in cases where colonial Virginia's planters witnessed their aristocratic legitimacy being questioned, they simply

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<sup>75</sup> Breen, *Tobacco Culture*

<sup>76</sup> Bushman, *The Refinement of America*

found new ways to reinvent themselves and their cultural ethos. For example, when Virginia's planters were criticized by the British gentry in the mid eighteenth century for being too rustic, too provincial, and disconnected from the *civilized* culture of English cities, planters initially got very angry and publicly rebuked such characterizations as false. However, when the attacks continued, Virginia planters decided to turn the source of such attacks into a sense of pride. Rozbicki writes that at this juncture, Virginians began to "describe plantation existence with pastoral rhetoric, turning the provincial into the bucolic and the distance from the refinement of Europe into an unspoiled environment where noble virtue could flourish."<sup>77</sup> It took a little creative thinking to right the ship, but for Virginia's planters, their constant need to define and validate themselves in the eyes of others often required such skills.

James Henretta and Charles Sydnor have demonstrated that this same sort of cultural adaptation applied to the political realm as well. In order to garner votes and maintain their political positions, Virginia planters continually had to appease poorer whites and middling freeholders in their districts. Therefore, planters faced an interesting conundrum. Not only did they have to find a way to mobilize the support of such men, but they needed to do it in such a way that prevented voters from realizing they were the ones with bargaining leverage. Henretta notes that particularly among the most powerful FFVs like the Carters, Lees, Randolphs, and Robinsons, the basic strategy was "to curry favor with these voters at election time, bribing them with rum, money, and the promise of favorable legislation and minor offices in county governments. In return, they [elites] expected yeomen and tenants to elect them to political office and defer to their

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<sup>77</sup> Rozbicki, *The Complete Colonial Gentleman*, 107.



authority.”<sup>78</sup> Yet, Sydnor observes that Virginia planters even went outside the bounds of bribery to get their way. In carrying out an Aristotlean ploy of deception, planters convinced themselves and those they served that as landed, disinterested gentlemen of leisure, they were the only ones fit to hold political office, even if in reality, the personal financial interests of planters always managed to supersede such theoretical disinterestedness.<sup>79</sup>

In reviewing these historical observations, it is clear that in colonial Virginia, things were not always what they seemed. Although society may have appeared to be under the control of a legitimate, stable, and exclusive planter aristocracy by the end of the seventeenth century, it was actually just as open and amenable to new blood as it was from the start of colonization. Uncomfortable with having to face this reality, planters took the lead in articulating how they thought their society should look and operate. They invented and reinvented themselves in order to make their vision come to fruition. To a large degree, planters’ uncanny ability to do this well was what allowed them to keep—at least the appearance of—legitimacy and continue to reap the socioeconomic and political rewards that came with it. However, Virginia’s planters could only do so much for so long; and as their actions were increasingly forced to contrast with their desires and belief systems by the beginning of the eighteenth century, their world became even more susceptible to change.

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<sup>78</sup> Henretta, Brody, Dumenil, and Ware, *America's History*, 90.

<sup>79</sup> Sydnor, *Gentlemen Freeholders*

## CHAPTER III

UNCOVERING THE “WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, AND WHY OF VIRGINIA’S  
PROFESSIONAL TRANSFORMATION

The winter of 1778-79 proved to be very busy for Virginia entrepreneur, David Ross. Despite General George Washington’s impressive summer performance at the Battle of Monmouth, the Continental Army still found itself in dire need of virtually every possible supply by year’s end. Hungry and tattered American troops not only needed more food and clothing to survive another long period of freezing weather, but they also needed additional arms, ammunition, and cannon if they hoped to defeat the better-equipped British Army again in the spring. Ross, both a prominent merchant and owner of the Oxford Iron Works near Lynchburg, was one of several men that Virginia’s Revolutionary executives immediately called on to help produce and procure such goods. Having already amassed a significant fortune in the twenty-five years since he had immigrated to Virginia from Scotland, Ross was certainly up to the task, particularly since it presented him with another potentially lucrative payday.<sup>80</sup>

As soon as Ross got his resources in order and made a few fundraising contacts, he set about putting a twofold plan into motion. First, in an attempt to acquire trading goods that could be profitably sold to both the American government and various other consumers, Ross and five other investors collectively pledged £170,000 of Virginia currency towards the incorporation of a new mercantile firm that was to be known as

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<sup>80</sup> Although no comprehensive biography has been written on David Ross to date, sporadic references to his business and political activities can be found in any number of general studies pertaining to colonial Virginia. For a more specific, albeit brief, account of Ross’s business and profiteering activities, see Charles B. Dew, “David Ross and the Oxford Iron Works: A Study of Industrial Slavery in the Nineteenth-Century South,” *William and Mary Quarterly (WMQ)*, Third Series, Vol. 31, No. 2, (April, 1974), 189-224. For a scholarly assessment of Ross’s personal fortune, see Jackson Turner Main, “The One Hundred,” *WMQ*, Third Series, 11 (1954), 354-84.

Ross, Shore & Company.<sup>81</sup> This new company was created as a means of securing wartime financial insurance for the profiteering that was about to ensue. No one, not even Ross, could clearly predict how the monetary markets would react in America's war-torn environment, where a clear victor had yet to emerge. Consequently, Ross and his partners came up with a clever way to hedge their bets.

While Ross, Shore & Company proposed to operate merchant stores in a few Virginia urban centers like Norfolk and Petersburg, its stockholders also pledged to make immediate European trade connections with Holland and France and establish an additional store in the West Indies to facilitate the whole enterprise. This way, the company could not only obtain and sell a number of desirable consumer goods that the British were blockading from American ports, but it could also circumvent some of the inflationary pitfalls attendant to operating a business solely in Virginia, where unstable paper currency was in wide circulation. Thus, while Ross, Shore & Company also planned to support the war effort at home by selling drastically marked-up European and West Indian goods to the Virginia government, at least a fair portion of the stockholders' profits would be leveraged elsewhere in more stable European currency.<sup>82</sup> And of course, if the Americans ever managed to drive the British out of North America and subsequently back their currency with the full faith and credit of a legitimate government, Ross and his partners stood to realize even more astronomical profits.

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<sup>81</sup> Ross, Shore & Company, Articles of Incorporation, 22 December, 1778, *Library of Virginia (LVA)* Manuscript Collection. Ross's five business partners in this particular firm were Thomas Shore, Thomas Pleasants, Christopher McConnico, Mark Freeman, and John Hay.

<sup>82</sup> Ross, Shore & Company, Articles of Incorporation. This contractual document, written in Ross's hand, contains a preamble in which Ross explicitly addresses the risky inflationary issues facing merchants and the trading opportunities that he wished to explore in other countries so that financial ruin could be averted.

The second dimension of Ross's master scheme concerned improving the manufacturing capacity of the Oxford Iron Works so that he could land a state contract for producing heavy war materiel. Although Ross had been running a fairly profitable operation at his six thousand acre ironworks since the beginning of the war, he only possessed "a forge and bloomery for refining pig metal into bars and other semi-finished iron products" like nails, horseshoes, bullets, and cookware.<sup>83</sup> What Ross really needed to add to these existing parts, therefore, was an industrial-strength blast furnace so that he "could convert [his] ore into pig iron" and then ship large quantities of the finished product to one of the state's foundries.<sup>84</sup> Once there, his iron could then be used for casting heavy artillery and various parts for other firearms. After realizing this need, Ross paid for the construction of a proper blast furnace, and by 1779, he had secured a major government contract from the state of Virginia—one which required him to provide one thousand tons of pig iron to the Westham Foundry in Richmond for the purpose of making cannon for the Continental Army.<sup>85</sup>

Ross's responses to his government's requests were likely as duplicitous as they were patriotic. Especially when one considers the fact that Ross was acquitted of serious Loyalist allegations at the beginning of the Revolution, it is possible to imagine that he reveled a bit knowing that he could possibly make a fortune at the expense of America's misfortunes.<sup>86</sup> However, neither Ross's business moves, nor the motivations behind them, were even questioned by Virginia's Revolutionary government. Governor Patrick Henry actually praised Ross's contributions to the cause and spoke very highly of the

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<sup>83</sup> Dew, "David Ross and the Oxford Iron Works," 192-193.

<sup>84</sup> Dew, "David Ross and the Oxford Iron Works," 192-193.

<sup>85</sup> Dew, "David Ross and the Oxford Iron Works," 192-193.

<sup>86</sup> The details of Ross's alleged Loyalist sympathies and his subsequent acquittal are documented in Dixon's *Virginia Gazette*, 18 October, 1776.

quality of Oxford Iron ordnance.<sup>87</sup> Virginia's second wartime governor Thomas Jefferson went even further, enlisting Ross as a Virginia commissary officer in 1780 and promoting him in 1781 to the position of state commercial agent. The latter of these two positions entrusted Ross with great responsibility, particularly since his primary duty at the time was to make sure that Virginia's Revolutionary troops were provided with the supplies they needed.<sup>88</sup>

One might wonder exactly how David Ross was able to pull off such a coup. After all, he was not directly related to any of the leading planter families that had customarily controlled the colony's domestic affairs and subsequently led Virginia into America's struggle for independence. Furthermore, Ross exhibited no apparent qualms with exploiting the Commonwealth's wartime demands for his own financial benefit, a characteristic that was hardly becoming of a selfless Virginia patriot. Yet, Ross possessed enough respect and credibility among the powers-that-be to both carry out his profiteering plans and be lauded like a gentleman hero for doing it. Why was this so?

The first, and perhaps most obvious, explanation concerns the major advantage Ross possessed in his wartime negotiations with the state. Quite simply, when one compares Ross's immense wealth and resources to the weak and precarious position of the Continental Army, it is more than plausible to assume that under the circumstances, Virginia political officials simply decided to overlook Ross's shortcomings in the interest of winning the war. Therefore, until Virginia's Continental regiments and militiamen had all of the supplies they needed, Virginia's executives prudently dodged confrontation and

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<sup>87</sup> Dew, "David Ross and the Oxford Iron Works," 193, n. 13.

<sup>88</sup> F. B. Kegley, *Kegley's Virginia Frontier: The Beginning of the Southwest: The Roanoke of Colonial Days, 1740-1783* (Baltimore: Geneological Pub. Co., 2003), 72-73.

simply accepted the fact that multitudes of greedy war profiteers stood to gain much more money than they deserved.

Ross's bargaining advantage, however, represents only one part of a larger, more complex answer to the question. When one looks beneath the surface and considers exactly how an immigrant merchant-manufacturer like Ross was able to become such a prominent player in Virginia's planter-dominated society to begin with, a myriad of other factors come into play—factors which indicate Ross owed a great deal of his wealth, power, and respectability to something much bigger than himself. More specifically, the advantageous position that Ross had carved out for himself by the beginning of the American Revolution was attributable to a dual phenomenon that occurred in Virginia throughout the eighteenth century—the emergence of influential, upper-middling professionals and the selective absorption of such men into the elite echelons of the colony's planter ranks.

Ross serves as a quintessential case in point. Contrary to his middling background and mercantile profession, it would have been hard upon first glance by 1778 to delineate between Ross and a planter of FFV lineage. Not only was Ross heavily immersed in mercantile and manufacturing pursuits by 1778, but he also oversaw multiple plantations and grist mills, owned hundreds of slaves, conducted business with large planters, socialized with Virginia elites, and held financial stakes in numerous planter-organized companies speculating in western territories. Historian Jackson Turner

Main concluded that by the mid-1780s, “the richest of all [Virginia] planters appears to have been David Ross, the Richmond merchant.”<sup>89</sup>

As Main’s indecisive categorization of Ross’s profession suggests though, Ross was not a prototypical Virginia tobacco planter. Nor was he one of those native Virginians who, in the image of powerful families like the Carters and Tayloes, had made their fortune in tobacco planting first and then prudently decided to explore various other manufacturing enterprises for economic diversification. On the contrary, Ross was, first and foremost, a savvy merchant and entrepreneur—someone who gradually converted his professional success in Virginia and a portion of his financial earnings into tertiary planting pursuits, albeit very large ones. Actually, Ross’s European birthplace and middling background inherently prevented him from being the instant heir apparent to an *aristocratic* FFV plantation master. Instead, he made his own way in Virginia and experienced all of the growing pains that went along with it.<sup>90</sup>

While many historians have implied that Ross was always an extraordinarily wealthy planter-manufacturer—by focusing only on his later life—his experiences during his formative years in Virginia prove otherwise. When Ross first came to Virginia in the mid-1750s, he was simply an ambitious teenage apprentice in the employment of Alexander Baine, a “general merchant” operating in Goochland County.<sup>91</sup> Although

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<sup>89</sup> Main, “The One Hundred,” 363. Per the 1780s tax records that Main studied, Ross owned just over one-hundred-thousand acres across thirteen Virginia counties, 400 slaves, 254 horses, and 806 heads of cattle. However, these slaveholding figures can be a bit deceiving in assessing his planting activities, since a large number of those slaves worked at Ross’s several ironworks, not on plantations.

<sup>90</sup> Little is known of Ross’s parents, but he was “born in Scotland about 1739” and first worked as a merchant’s apprentice in Virginia. See “A Guide to the David Ross Papers, 1813, 1822,” in the Virginia Heritage Guides to Manuscript and Archives Collections in Virginia. <http://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaead/published/lva/vi00317.frame>

<sup>91</sup> Per the tithe list compiled by Joseph Pollard for Goochland County Virginia in 1758, Ross was initially listed as a co-resident in Alexander Baine’s household. Furthermore, Baine was simply described as a “general merchant in Virginia” in Kegley, *Kegley’s Virginia Frontier*, 569.

Ross soon proved capable of tending to Baine's affairs and running his own independent mercantile operations on the side, he was not a seasoned, wealthy factor upon arrival.<sup>92</sup>

Ross did not even purchase any slaves until he had lived and worked in Virginia for five years, and he never stopped complaining about how difficult it was to profitably conduct business in Virginia, where the value of tobacco, slaves, and paper currency were so inflated and unpredictable from one day to the next.<sup>93</sup> Lastly, as evidenced by Ross's Revolutionary War profiteering and generally stingy business demeanor, he was never fully satisfied or secure with all he had accomplished—a fact that prevented him from assuming the same entitled attitude of his longer-established planting peers. As far as Ross was concerned, there was always a chance of losing what he had gained, and the more ways he could continue to diversify his business ventures, collect what was owed to him, and make large profits, the better protected he would ultimately be.<sup>94</sup>

While Ross's rise to prominence in Virginia was hardly the colonial equivalent of an American *rags-to-riches* story, the overwhelming majority of his success was self-made, not inherited. Minus his basic education and apprenticeship, both of which were likely attributable to his family's modest patronage, Ross gained the greater portion of his

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<sup>92</sup> Ross was independently managing affairs on Baine's behalf as early as 1766 when Baine took out an advertisement in which he referred clients to Ross while he was out of the country conducting business in Great Britain. For the advertisement, see Purdie and Dixon's *Virginia Gazette*, 19 September, 1766.

<sup>93</sup> David Ross to John Hook, 23 March, 1772, John Hook Records, *LVA*. Ross stated in the letter that "when I came into the country, I went for the first five years [and] there was not a slave belonging to the concern, and it would have been lucky for Mr. Baine had he preserved in the same plan 5 years longer."

<sup>94</sup> For many years following the American Revolution, Ross persisted in asking Virginia officials to pay what was owed to him from his war contracts, particularly after Governor Edmund Randolph angered him even more by authorizing fortifications to be built on a plot of land that fell within the bounds of Ross's Point of Fork plantation. For more details on these affairs, see David Ross to Edmund Randolph, 30 January, 1787 and Elias Langham to Edmund Randolph, 26 June, 1787, in the Executive Papers of Governor Edmund Randolph, 1786-1788, *LVA*. On a related note, it is also worth mentioning that Ross was wise to not take his fortune for granted, because in the wake of difficult economic conditions, he did eventually lose the bulk of his fortune in the early nineteenth-century, per a reference in Main, "The One Hundred," 363.



wealth, property, and status over time by simply working hard, mastering his trade, making connections with the right people, and never taking anything for granted.<sup>95</sup> Considering that so many sons of the Virginia planter *aristocracy* were conversely born with instantaneous wealth, property, and privileged status without ever really having to work for such things, it is no wonder that the emergence and great fortunes of a man like Ross garnered the attention and respect of the colony's elite planters and ultimately convinced them to incorporate some professionals into their own ranks and take advantage of their talents.

As aptly as Ross's story illustrates how an upper-middling professional in colonial Virginia could defy convention and eventually attain the same levels of wealth, property, social status, and political clout as FFV planters, there are certainly limits to what the story of one man can explain. In fact, unless a sizeable number of other similar cases can prove that Ross's situation was more than anomalous, the very concept of socially-mobile professionals substantively affecting colonial Virginia's society is essentially moot. Additionally, as only a broad, general connection has been made thus far between Ross's experiences and the greater emergence of upper-middling professionals in colonial Virginia, some of the most critical determinants that contributed to Ross's advancement remain unaccounted for. After all, neither Ross nor his fellow professionals would have likely amounted to much in Virginia had they not first been benefactors of certain changes that altered the colony's demographic, physical, and economic makeup throughout the eighteenth century—a fact which is, oddly enough, just

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<sup>95</sup> Because very few, if any, merchants of Ross's age would have come into the colony and simply taken up the mercantile profession independently, it is fairly safe to assume that his family in Scotland did possess enough means to secure Ross a rudimentary education and apprenticeship before his arrival.

as applicable to the rise of Virginia's great planter families during the mid-to-late seventeenth century.

Taking these greater environmental changes into consideration, the following chapter attempts to analyze Virginia professionals on a basic demographic and practical level. More specifically, the intent is to uncover the *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *why* of eighteenth-century Virginia's professional transformation, as well as how a diverse assortment of professional immigrants applied their occupational skills towards advancement in a planter-dominated society that was seemingly closed-off to outsiders. Thus, by pairing some preexisting demographic and social data with multiple professional success-stories similar to that of David Ross, an oft-overlooked and decidedly professional immigration trend in eighteenth-century Virginia begins to look much more important than previously assumed.

Around the beginning of the eighteenth century, when most mid-to-upper-middling professionals first noticeably began to settle in Virginia, the colony was in the midst of a demographic phase in which uncharacteristically low numbers of European immigrants were coming to its shores. Even though Virginia's white population grew at a reasonable rate during this period—it nearly tripled from 57,000 inhabitants in 1680 to 158,000 in 1730—the growth was primarily attributable to natural increase, not immigration.<sup>96</sup> The drop-off in European immigration was due to a variety of factors. First of all, an extensive period of mercurial returns in Virginia's tobacco market coincided with an increase in European wages and an improvement in Europe's standard

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<sup>96</sup> Lorena S. Walsh, *Motives of Honor, Pleasure, and Profit: Plantation Management in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1607-1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 205.

cost of living.<sup>97</sup> Considering that the majority of whites who came to the colony prior to 1680 were lower-class indentured servants looking to escape severe poverty in Europe by planting Virginia tobacco, this slight improvement in economic circumstances caused them to become a little less desperate than they had been previously.

Furthermore, as Virginia's great planters had increasingly turned to black slavery as their primary labor source and essentially started to phase out indentured servitude, significantly fewer opportunities existed for poor, unskilled white Virginians to make a decent living as tobacco farmers. Due to the increased productivity of large, self-sustaining, black labor forces, the landholdings, plantations, and earnings of Virginia's wealthiest tobacco tycoons grew even bigger during the early eighteenth century. As a result, Virginia gradually turned into an environment where the best a small farmer could hope for was to either aimlessly migrate towards the unsettled western wilderness or continue to consign his measly tobacco crop to the major planter in his area and hope that he earned enough of a profit to afford planting another crop the following year. Thus, by the early 1700s, many of Europe's poor, who would have likely come over to Virginia as indentured servants decades before, were convinced that it was much safer and more appealing to stay at home in Europe. Immigration to Virginia simply meant risking one's livelihood for a world that was—at least for small white farmers—increasingly marred by dead-end tobacco planting prospects and rapidly decreasing opportunities for social and financial advancement.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Walsh, *Motives of Honor*, 199.

<sup>98</sup> Walsh, *Motives of Honor*, 198-199. For additional analyses concerning the economic and social impact on smaller white farmers vis-a-vis planters' transition towards black slavery, see Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1975); and Darrett Bruce Rutman and Anita H. Rutman, *A Place in Time: Middlesex County, Virginia, 1650-1750*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (New York: Norton, 1984).

Generally speaking, however, this trend was only applicable to Europe's lower-classes. In fact, a good number of more well-to-do European professionals and enterprising, middling men from adjoining colonies increasingly viewed Virginia as a land of great promise. It is, therefore, no coincidence that at nearly the same time poor European immigrants began to shy away from Virginia, this diverse new crop of individuals began to settle in the colony.

Lorena Walsh has noted that in spite of whatever stagnation Virginia's European immigration statistics indicate between 1680 and 1730, "a trickle of young men from solid middling backgrounds—merchants, ministers, lawyers, royal officers, and the like—continued to try to improve their fortunes in the [Chesapeake] region around the turn of the century."<sup>99</sup> These men could afford to take such risks because they did not have to wholly rely on some grand planting scheme to make their fortunes. They possessed other professional skills that could not only contribute something valuable to the inhabitants of a developing colony, but also produce respectable profits in the process. Lastly, the vast majority of these professionals were already well-educated and familiar with the hierarchical Old World customs of patronage and deference that FFV planters were trying so hard to replicate in the colony. Therefore, these particular professionals had fewer potential hurdles to overcome in building their business clienteles, securing advantageous marriages to planters' daughters, acquiring choice land grants, and slowly climbing to the upper-half of Virginia's social pyramid.

Paul Micou, for example, was one of many such professionals. A well-educated French Huguenot physician and surgeon who came to Virginia around 1693, Dr. Micou

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<sup>99</sup> Walsh, *Motives of Honor*, 267.

established a very active and successful medical practice in the Rappahannock River region commonly referred to as the Northern Neck. Although Micou had no ancestral ties to any of the prominent Virginia families that were already consolidating their planter power, his wide assortment of professional accolades enabled him to “speedily win the confidence of his neighbors and a prominent place in local affairs.”<sup>100</sup>

In addition to his medical training, Micou had traveled briefly to England to study law at the Inns of Court. Moreover, Micou was well-enough versed in mercantile affairs to dabble in the shipping trade that increasingly occupied Rappahannock River ports. Consequently, Micou’s name is mentioned in three different professional contexts within various court documents. Micou frequently sued clients and estates for unpaid medical expenses, looked after the mercantile interests of numerous trading partners, and assisted his friends in drawing up legal contracts when he was a justice of the peace. Perhaps even more impressive was the fact that Micou was able to convert the profits from his professional enterprises into a very comfortable living with multiple land holdings in neighboring Virginia counties. When Micou’s final will and testament was probated on November 16, 1736, his estate consisted of “no less than 64 slaves,” a great library of medical and “physick books,” two prized New York horses, “three feather beds,” an eighteen-piece set of silverware, a watch, several rings, and something in the vicinity of three thousand acres of land in Essex, King George, and Spotsylvania counties, all of which he passed on to his wife and children.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Elizabeth Hawes Ryland, “Paul Micou, Chyrurgeon,” *WMQ*, Second Series, Vol. 16, No. 2 (April, 1936), 241. For additional information on Micou and his family in Virginia, see Paul Micou, “Paul Micou, Huguenot Physician, and his Descendants,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography (VMHB)*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (October, 1938), 362-370.

<sup>101</sup> Ryland, “Paul Micou, Chyrurgeon,” 245 and Micou, “Paul Micou, Huguenot Physician,” 362-364.

William Mayo, an English immigrant who came to Virginia in 1723, found similar luck in the professional fields of surveying and engineering. During the two decades that he spent in Virginia before his death in 1744, Mayo made his living by working on some of the most important surveying projects undertaken in Virginia's early history. Mayo not only laid out the initial plans for the present state capital of Richmond, but he also played instrumental roles in surveying the boundary line between Virginia and North Carolina and exploring the unsettled western portion of the colony beyond the Blue Ridge Mountains.<sup>102</sup>

Since prominent Virginia planting families like the Fairfaxes and Byrds held title to immense land grants in those territories, it did not take long for Mayo to curry favor among Virginia's elite. His training as a civil engineer in Great Britain and the extensive time he had previously spent putting his city-planning expertise to use in the Royal colony of Barbados inherently provided him a sense of leverage and esteem with his primary employers that many others within his profession would certainly have not possessed. Thus, by the time Mayo died, he was one of the colony's most respected citizens and the government-appointed head of its civil engineering operations.<sup>103</sup>

Doctor George Nicholas went even a step further than Micou and Mayo—both of whom were already married before they came into the colony—by parlaying his professional respectability into a most advantageous marriage. Before coming to Virginia around 1700, Nicholas had already enhanced his social status by training in medicine and then putting his acquired skills to use in His Majesty's Royal Navy as a

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<sup>102</sup> Lyon Gardiner Tyler, *Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography, Volume I*. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1915), I: 288.

<sup>103</sup> Tyler, *Encyclopedia*, I: 288.

surgeon.<sup>104</sup> As good doctors were increasingly needed in Virginia, Nicholas had no problems finding work upon his arrival in the colony's brand new capital of Williamsburg. His medical practice there flourished and within a decade or so, he earned a reputation as "one of the leading physicians in the colony."<sup>105</sup>

This reputation helped Nicholas to develop a sense of trust and prestige among some of the leading planter families of the Tidewater, especially those whose sick family members benefitted from Nicholas's medical care. According to one source, Nicholas even won the privilege of serving as Governor William Gooch's primary physician and continued to serve in that capacity until Dr. Nicholas's death in 1734.<sup>106</sup> This honor, however, was preceded by an even more monumental moment in Dr. Nicholas's life. When Robert *King* Carter's daughter, Elizabeth Carter Burwell, became an available and extraordinarily wealthy widow in 1721, Nicholas saw a golden opportunity to substantially capitalize on the connections he had recently made with the planter class. Throwing all caution to the wind, Dr. Nicholas quickly made an overture to win Elizabeth's hand in marriage. Following a fairly lengthy courtship, during which Nicholas undoubtedly had to work a little harder than Robert Carter's other FFV son-in-laws at proving his suitability, George and Elizabeth finally earned the family's blessing to be married in 1724.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Thomas P. Abernethy, "Robert Carter Nicholas." *Dictionary of American Biography*. American Council of Learned Societies, 1928-1936. Reproduced in History Resource Center. (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale), Accessed 20 July, 2010.

<sup>105</sup> "Virginia Council Journals, 1726-1753 (continued)," *VMHB*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (January, 1925), 43.

<sup>106</sup> William Hamilton Bryson and Lewis Burwell, "A Letter of Lewis Burwell to James Burrough, July 8, 1734," *VMHB*, Vol. 81, No. 4 (October, 1973), 413, 43n, 44n.

<sup>107</sup> The fact that Elizabeth Carter already possessed a significant fortune through her family and first marriage to FFV planter, Nathaniel Burwell, probably helped George Nicholas's chances with marrying her, particularly since "King" Carter's other daughters (Judith and Anne), who were old enough to have been married at the time, were also wed to FFV planters, Mann Page and Benjamin Harrison, respectively.

Considering that one of Dr. Nicholas's new brother-in-laws, Landon Carter, later objected to another family member marrying a doctor on the basis that "he has nothing but his practice" to support a family, Nicholas's marriage into one of the most powerful planter families in the colony at the time is impressive.<sup>108</sup> However, what proved even more significant about this marriage was that Dr. George and Elizabeth Nicholas's future son and famous lawyer, Robert Carter Nicholas, followed in his father's footsteps by undertaking a profession outside of plantation management. Although Robert Carter Nicholas never had to solely rely on legal fees for his income, his decision to become a regularly-practicing attorney reflected an important societal change that started to reveal itself near the middle of the eighteenth century. Realizing the need to diversify the skill-sets of subsequent generations and avoid the pitfalls of mercurial tobacco prices, many of Virginia's wealthiest planter families began to encourage their sons to learn professional occupations outside of tobacco planting and practice them in more meaningful, full-time capacities afterwards.

The cases of other European professionals like James Geddy Sr., John Mercer, and Thomas *Scotch Tom* Nelson are also important to consider in this early wave of professional immigration, but not just for their personal accomplishments and upward social mobility. What makes Geddy, Mercer, and Nelson so intriguing is the fact that they were able to supplement their financial fortunes and social status in the colony by building reputable and sustainable family legacies that were decidedly professional. Thus, while these men and their sons certainly depended on planters' money to make a

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<sup>108</sup> Landon Carter and Jack Greene, ed., *The Diary of Colonel Landon Carter of Sabine Hall, 1752-1778* (Richmond: Virginia Historical Society, 1987). The man Landon Carter criticized was Dr. Elisha Hall of Fredericksburg. Greene notes that Hall "married Caroline, daughter of Charles Carter of Cleve." Caroline was Landon Carter's niece, 1122.



living, the unique, occupational rites of passage their families perpetuated across multiple generations made their identities different from those who exclusively identified their occupations as planters or estate managers. Moreover, as the patriarchs of these *Second Families* came to Virginia as mid-to-upper-middling outsiders and took advantage of their surroundings to make long-lasting marks on the colony, their journeys constitute a mirror image of what FFV planters had done fifty years before, just with different occupations.

The least wealthy and renowned of these aforementioned professional patriarchs, James Geddy Sr., was a gunsmith and brass founder from Scotland who immigrated to Williamsburg, Virginia at some point prior to 1733.<sup>109</sup> Like most European tradesmen in his particular field, Geddy Sr. would have been initially considered a middling, but fairly unsophisticated, working-class man. He could definitely read, write, and manage a ledger of accounts, but much of the education he would have likely received during his early years in Europe would not have come from a private tutor or university, but an apprenticeship with a master craftsman. Furthermore, as class distinctions in Europe were much more concrete at the time than they were in the New World, there would have been little hope for Geddy to elevate his social status in any meaningful way had he remained in Europe.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> For basic biographical information on the Geddys and some archeological analyses of their Williamsburg residence, foundry and shop, see Ivor Noel Hume, *James Geddy and Sons, Colonial Craftsmen* (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1970).

<sup>110</sup> In his 1712 essay, entitled *Profitable Advice for Rich and Poor*, John Norris analyzed the various classes represented in the colonial South. Although, he particularly focused on South Carolina's class structure, it is similar to what would have been observed in Virginia. Above the poor masses of white farmers, Norris described a second class that someone like Geddy would have likely fit into. It was made up of "men of small estates, or jusment renters [and] provident tradesmen whose substance was small" and who could not live in England without hard labour and toil." Norris' quote is cited in Jack P. Greene, *Imperatives, Behaviors, and Identities: Essays in Early American Cultural History* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992), 91.

However, a short time after Geddy Sr. settled in Virginia, he began to exhibit characteristics that reflected a clear desire to elevate his social status. To begin with, he wasted little time in acquiring some indentured servants to work for him.<sup>111</sup> While this was certainly a very common practice in Virginia, the fact that Geddy Sr. made this move so quickly upon arrival indicates that he at least viewed himself as superior to the lower sorts of unskilled whites who were still struggling to find work in the colony. Moreover, it set a critical, early example that his sons would emulate decades later in their comparatively larger purchases of black slaves. Geddy Sr. also made a concerted effort to expand his land holdings within the city. Although Geddy Sr.'s home and shop were already advantageously situated on the east lot No. 162, which was located on the city's main thoroughfare, Duke of Gloucester Street, "he bought its neighbor, lot No. 161 to the west in 1738."<sup>112</sup> With the extra space, Geddy Sr. knew that he could improve his shop's capacity, train his sons in several other types of metalwork, and enhance his family business's potential for future profits.

This business strategy ultimately proved to be prophetic, because when James Geddy Sr. first worked in Williamsburg, the city was still growing into its relatively new role as the colony's main hub of commercial, political, and social activity. Even by 1745, the total white population in Virginia was only about 150,000 people and the overwhelming majority of those individuals did not live within an urban center like

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<sup>111</sup> Parks' *Virginia Gazette*, 15 October, 1736. In this newspaper, William Wyatt placed a runaway notice claiming that a servant of his ran off with a servant of Mr. Geddy's, thus providing some early evidence of James Geddy owning servants.

<sup>112</sup> Hume, *James Geddy and Sons*, 11.

Williamsburg.<sup>113</sup> The elder James Geddy, however, did not look at Williamsburg's small population as a detriment to the family legacy he sought to build. Rather, he surmised that with fewer customers and a slightly underdeveloped commercial infrastructure, gaining financial success would require him and his sons to become jacks of several metallurgical trades. That way, the Geddys could obtain a greater market share among the city's small, but growing population and position their business to grow with the city.

According to a series of advertisements that both James Geddy Sr. and his sons placed in *The Virginia Gazette* over the course of the next decades, the family excelled in carrying out James Geddy Sr.'s vision. For example, in 1738, James Geddy Sr. advertised that his customers could not only be provided with "neat fowling-pieces and large guns fit for killing wild fowl in rivers at a reasonable rate" but also a variety of wrought brass-work services and bell casting.<sup>114</sup> Thirteen years later, after James Geddy Sr. had long since passed, his sons' advertisement showed that the business had not only been carried on by the family, but that it had grown substantially in terms of what it could offer its customers. In addition to the standard gunsmithing and casting services first offered by their father, David Geddy and his brother William described an assortment of other things that people could purchase from the Geddy foundry such as utensils, buckles, nails, navigational dials, needles and sights for surveyors compasses, swords, and rupture bands, all items which were in growing demand.<sup>115</sup>

Additionally, as the city's residents and neighboring colonists grew even more cosmopolitan in their tastes in the years leading up to the American Revolution, James

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<sup>113</sup> Peter H. Wood, "The Changing Population," in Peter H. Wood, Gregory A. Waselkov, and M. Thomas Hatley, *Powhatan's Mantle: Indians in the Colonial Southeast* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989)

<sup>114</sup> Parks' *Virginia Gazette*, 6 October, 1738.

<sup>115</sup> Hunter's *Virginia Gazette*, 8 August, 1751.

Geddy Jr. also decided to take a more active role in the family business as a silversmith, goldsmith, and importer of fine jewelry. In 1760, Geddy Jr. bought the family house on Duke of Gloucester Street from his widowed mother and temporarily used the space as both a living quarters and retail/business space. Business must have been quite good, since just two years later, Geddy Jr. could afford to tear down the original house on the property and replace it with a much more regal, two-story structure which featured a number of fine architectural details. This house, along with the adjacent family-owned foundry that continued to be operated by James Jr.'s brothers, helped the Geddys to carve out an even more noticeable place of prominence among Williamsburg's citizens.<sup>116</sup>

Geddy Jr., in fact, hinted at the lucrative state of his silver, gold, and jewelry enterprises in 1774 when, in spite of colonists' growing unwillingness to buy British goods, he boasted that he "had just imported from London a genteel assortment of plate and jewelry," none of which could have been easily sold at the time, except to a reliably regular and wealthy clientele.<sup>117</sup> Although Geddy Jr.'s seemingly desperate attempts to buy old and used silver just two years later demonstrate how non-importation adversely affected his business during America's War for Independence, the consequence of his name and family fortune by that time was sufficient enough to avoid catastrophic ruin.<sup>118</sup> Geddy Jr., in fact, had served on Williamsburg's Common Council in the late 1760s and been elected to the city's Revolutionary Committee thereafter.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> According to Ivor Noel Hume, one of the most profitable changes that resulted from James Jr.'s foray into the family business was that he actually "did less manufacturing than selling of imported or other American craftsmen's silver." See Hume, *James Geddy and Sons*, 24.

<sup>117</sup> Purdie and Dixon's *Virginia Gazette*, 13 October, 1774.

<sup>118</sup> Purdie's *Virginia Gazette*, 20 September, 1776

<sup>119</sup> For notices of James Geddy Jr.'s political appointments, see Purdie and Dixon's *Virginia Gazette*, 3 December, 1767 and Pinckney's *Virginia Gazette*, 9 November, 1775

Furthermore, both Geddy Jr. and his brothers had already gained enough land, slaves, and elite connections outside of their regular business activities to feel fairly comfortable and financially secure, even in the midst of a forthcoming economic downturn and the uncertainty of a revolution. William Geddy, for instance, owned and operated a small “326 acre farm about ten miles outside the city” and continued to earn professional income by doing some contract metalwork for the Revolutionary state government.<sup>120</sup> Meanwhile, James Geddy Jr. “became a manager of slave and free labor and a landowner of substance himself” who continued to profitably practice his trade for many years in Dinwiddie and Petersburg after leaving Williamsburg in 1777.<sup>121</sup>

For John Mercer and Thomas *Scotch Tom* Nelson, both of whom came to Virginia in the early eighteenth century and respectively became very successful in the legal and mercantile fields, the occupational dimensions of their advancement were naturally a bit different than those of a skilled tradesman like James Geddy Sr. Additionally, the fortunes and reputations that Mercer and Nelson eventually established for the future generations of their families were more substantial than what the elder Geddy or his sons were able to realize. However, at their core, the Mercer and Nelson families possessed much more in common with a family like the Geddys than what the record might initially indicate. All of them, for example, were originally descended from middling European backgrounds and they all made their family fortunes in Virginia primarily through non-planting professions. Furthermore, as they all developed important business and personal

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<sup>120</sup> “The Geddy Family” and “James Geddy Jr.,” The Colonial Williamsburg Official History Site, <http://www.history.org/Almanack/people/bios/gedbijam.cfm>, Accessed October 5, 2010.

<sup>121</sup> “James Geddy Jr.,” The Colonial Williamsburg Official History Site; Colonial Williamsburg’s historians contend that James Geddy, Jr. was “accepted into the gentry class” because he, like several other Virginians “found a lucrative niche in the Chesapeake economy, providing specialized products or services to the gentry and ultimately to one another.”

relationships with Virginia's great planter families over time, their validation as professionals concomitantly enabled them to gain the acceptance and favor of the colony's ruling class.

John Mercer, the Dublin-born son of an Irish merchant, immigrated to Virginia in 1720.<sup>122</sup> Although Mercer later confessed to one of his sons that outside of his education, he “never got a shilling of his father’s or any other relative’s estate in Ireland,” he was actually quite successful at taking what little money he did have at his disposal and quickly converting it into a considerable fortune.<sup>123</sup> The majority of Mercer’s money, however, initially came from his business activities as a freelancing Virginia merchant and land speculator, not tobacco planting. Furthermore, as Mercer eventually decided to become a lawyer in the 1730s, he parlayed yet another non-planting profession into greater riches. Due to the incredible volume of casework that he handled and his renowned passion in the courtroom, (he was disciplined numerous times by colonial judges for his bad temper and inappropriate behavior) Mercer eventually ended up producing a steady yearly income of over £2,000 sterling from his legal practice alone.<sup>124</sup> Mercer’s legal income especially helped to make him a fairly rich man; and when that income was enhanced by a fortunate marriage into the prominent Mason family of Virginia, Mercer had more than enough money to establish himself as a planter as well.

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<sup>122</sup> Tyler, *Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography*, I: 290.

<sup>123</sup> John Mercer to George Mercer, 22 December, 1767. Garnett-Mercer-Hunter Family Papers, *LVA*

<sup>124</sup> Walsh, *Motives of Honor*, 514-518. Walsh particularly notes that “Mercer’s attempts at estate building would not have been very successful had he depended solely on income from planting.” (517). For further information on the volume of Mercer’s casework and his temperament in court, see references to Mercer in either Alan M. Smith, “Virginia Lawyers, 1680-1776: The Birth of an American Profession,” unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1967 or A. G. Roeber, *Faithful Magistrates and Republican Lawyers: Creators of Virginia Legal Culture, 1680-1810* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981).

Because Mercer became such a talented attorney and created a marital connection with an established, well-to-do Virginia family, he naturally attracted the attention of a number of Virginia planters who were in need of legal representation. Thus, in addition to the numerous cases Mercer tried on behalf of lesser clients in county and city courts, he also spent a fair amount of his time responding to the frequent requests of major planters, who asked his advice on their various boundary claims, financial disputes with merchants, or in the case of the *nouveau riche* planter George Washington, how to administer the estate of a wealthy widow. Just three months after his marriage to Martha Dandridge Custis in 1759, George Washington wrote to Mercer with a long and comprehensive list of legal questions he had with regards to the administration of his wife's estate and exactly how much he could expect to gain from the final settlement. As Mercer's services had been previously retained by the Custis family for various legal disputes, Washington considered him to be the most appropriate, knowledgeable, and capable lawyer for overseeing the whole affair.<sup>125</sup>

Despite John Mercer's reputation throughout the colony as an outstanding attorney, perhaps his most important achievement over the long-term was his ability to raise respectable and well-connected sons in his own professional image. It was not just one generation of Mercers who played influential professional roles in Virginia's affairs, but many. In fact, even as the elder Mercer's professional fortunes enabled him to own land and slaves and build a substantial plantation for his family at Marlborough in Stafford County, his sons ultimately looked beyond planting and hedged their future financial prospects by pursuing other specialized occupations. Of John Mercer's three

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<sup>125</sup> George Washington to John Mercer, 20 April, 1759. *The Papers of George Washington Digital Edition (GW Papers)*, ed. Theodore J. Crackel. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008).

sons who managed to survive military service and live into full adulthood, George Mercer became a soldier and surveyor-speculator, James Mercer became a lawyer and judge, and John Francis Mercer briefly studied law before serving in the American Revolution as General Charles Lee's aide-de-camp and later becoming Governor of Maryland.<sup>126</sup>

James Mercer, in particular, had all but eschewed planting by 1767. According to a long advertisement he posted in *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, Mercer stated that “after 9 years experience, I am convinced a Virginia estate interferes too much with my profession.”<sup>127</sup> Further claiming that he could not focus on planting without “doing injustice to those who depend” on his legal services, James Mercer proposed to liquidate a fairly substantial number of his lands and slaves. Among some livestock and other small dependencies that were attached to his various properties, he proposed to sell roughly 26,000 acres, lease another 752, and sell 40 of his slaves, the latter of which he described as “very likely” and particularly “well fed and clothed from their birth.”<sup>128</sup> Given the immensity of such holdings and how James Mercer specifically prefaced his advertisement, the decision to choose a full-time legal practice over running multiple plantations was clearly something he had given serious thought. Furthermore, it reflected an altogether different attitude that a new generation had developed in a world where careers in both professional occupations and planting were beginning to yield similar monetary rewards and levels of status.

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<sup>126</sup> James Mercer Garnett, *Genealogy of the Mercer-Garnett Family of Essex County, Virginia. Supposed to Be Descended from the Garnetts of Lancashire, England. Comp. From Original Records, and from Oral and Written Statements of Members of the Family* (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson Printers, 1910), 44-54.

<sup>127</sup> *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 10 September, 1767.

<sup>128</sup> *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 10 September, 1767.



It was a good thing that John Mercer's sons were able to provide for themselves in ways other than planting, because some bad financial investments, too many years of lavish living, and a series of outstanding loans ultimately saddled their father with massive debts before his death. Although John Mercer's sons were able to retain their family homestead by means of a legal loophole, they had to start over again to build back the Mercer family's fortune and credit.<sup>129</sup> However, just as in the case of the Geddy family, the elder patriarch of the Mercer family had laid sufficient groundwork so that future generations of family professionals could carry on successfully in the colony. Regardless of their middling origins and/or non-planting occupations, Mercer's sons seamlessly assumed the same prominent position their father had earned alongside Chesapeake's great planters.

The experiences of men like James Geddy Sr. and John Mercer exemplify an important precedent that professionals and their families established during the colony's first noticeable phase of mid-to-upper-middling immigration. Yet, no professional was more influential in that formative period than the Yorktown merchant, Thomas *Scotch Tom* Nelson. In fact, the reputation and fortune that Tom Nelson established for himself and the future generations of his family were so great that the Nelson family has since been exclusively labeled by historians as one of Virginia's First Families. Even as recently as 2009, Emory Evans included the Nelsons in his list of the forty most elite families in colonial Virginia—a list which, aside from the Nelson family, contains nothing but FFV planter families.<sup>130</sup> However, if one looks past the Nelson family's

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<sup>129</sup> Walsh, *Motives of Honor*, 518.

<sup>130</sup> Emory G. Evans, *A "Topping People": The Rise and Decline of Virginia's Old Political Elite, 1680-1790* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 2 & 205n.

wealth and examines when and how it was originally produced, it is clear that the Nelsons' experiences were fundamentally different from those of the FFV planters they are so often associated with. In fact, when one collectively considers the elder Nelson's social background, when he immigrated to the colony, and the professional vehicle by which he attained lasting wealth and status, the Nelson family name represents much more of an upper-middling, professional success story than a birthright of an *aristocratic* Virginia planter.

To Evans' credit, he does acknowledge that Nelson was decidedly different from the other great Virginia planters in the sense that "land and planting were not his first priorities."<sup>131</sup> That Nelson was, first and foremost, a merchant and that his mercantile business in Yorktown provided his primary source of income are facts that cannot be denied. However, instead of delving further into how an immigrant merchant could so quickly and successfully establish himself in an environment that was already dominated by planters, Evans and most other historians have chosen to interpret the Nelson family's association with FFVs as a minor exception to the rule.

After all, just like so many of the elite Virginia planters who had first gained power and influence during the mid-to-late seventeenth century, "Scotch Tom" Nelson was also descended from the less-esteemed mercantile class of England. His father was a cloth merchant in Penrith, England. Furthermore, Tom Nelson's sons did eventually enhance their family's fortune by adding major holdings in land, tobacco plantations, and slaves, all of which mirrored their wealthy planter contemporaries.

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<sup>131</sup> Evans, *A Topping People*, 97. For additional background on the subsequent generations of the Nelson family in colonial Virginia, see Emory Evans, *Thomas Nelson of Yorktown: Revolutionary Virginian*. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1975).

However, the problem with this interpretation is that it overlooks the broader, profession-specific ramifications of Tom Nelson's initial success in the colony. Thus, while it certainly seems practical to assume that Tom Nelson was an exception to the popular historiographical paradigms that predominantly designate planters as colonial Virginia's elites, it makes just as much sense to say that Nelson was a trailblazing pioneer in establishing a new set of rules for upper-middling professionals, many of whom were steadily beginning to immigrate into the colony and follow his example.

A variety of factors support this stance. To begin with, *Scotch Tom* Nelson did not even settle in Virginia until 1705—a fact which places him well outside of the time frame in which many FFV progenitors and their kin were making their fortunes in tobacco planting, creating familial and political alliances, and developing their unique cultural identities as *aristocratic* Virginia planters. By the time Tom Nelson arrived in Virginia, there was already an elite group of first, second, and even third-generation planters who, along with the Royal Governor, dominated the socioeconomic hierarchy and oversaw the colony's political affairs.

In fact, while *Scotch Tom* Nelson's sons eventually held high political offices in Virginia's government, Evans notes that *Scotch Tom* himself “never served in public office above that of the county court.”<sup>132</sup> Additionally, since the elder Nelson's late arrival caused him to miss out on the opportunity for gaining a major planting fortune by roughly a decade or so, his financial success was entirely contingent on his ability to apply his particular profession to his new surroundings. Thus, by the early part of the eighteenth century, when planters started to find it more necessary to let domestic

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<sup>132</sup> Evans, *A Topping People*, 97.

merchants or resident European factors serve as their middle-men for both handling tobacco consignments and acquiring imported European goods, Tom Nelson was one of the first Virginians to capitalize on that development.

Nelson certainly did capitalize in a big way. Evans notes that at the time of *Scotch Tom* Nelson's death in 1745, he "left cash bequests of more than ten-thousand pounds, an amount that includes nothing of what the eldest son, William, who inherited the bulk of the estate received."<sup>133</sup> Moreover, as Tom Nelson's sons continued to reap the financial rewards of their father's labors after his death, they had little trouble incorporating themselves even more firmly into the upper echelons of the planter class. Nelson's second son, often referred to as Thomas Sr., became the official secretary of Virginia's Royal Council, married a member of the Armistead family, and subsequently became involved with the Harrison, Randolph, Grymes, Lee, Blair, Lewis, Custis, and Fairfax families in their schemes to speculate in western lands.

Meanwhile, as William Nelson carried on *Scotch Tom*'s mercantile business and eventually passed it on to his own son, Thomas Nelson, Jr., both men also married women of FFV lineage. Such moves ensconced the Nelsons among Virginia's planter elites and virtually guaranteed the family several more generations of sustainable wealth and political influence in Virginia.<sup>134</sup> However, it must also be said that the Nelson family's acceptance into such exclusive company would have never been possible in the

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<sup>133</sup> Evans, *A Topping People*, 97.

<sup>134</sup> Emory Evans argues that the financial well-being and political power of the Nelson family was starting to waver a bit by the beginning of the American Revolution. However, it is my opinion that the family's reputation and cultural status, just like those of most FFVs, were already significant enough to withstand financial losses and still aid its members in retaining a respectable amount of political influence and social status beyond that point in time. For a chart that speculates on the solvency of other elite Virginia families in 1775, see Evans, *A Topping People*, 115.

first place without the hard work of an upper-middling Virginia professional who never really had much to do with planting.

Of course, it is also important to point out that not all professionals who immigrated to Virginia in the early-to-mid eighteenth century possessed previous occupational training like Micou, Mayo, Nicholas, Geddy, Mercer, and Nelson. Nor did Virginia's professional immigrants all necessarily work in the more traditionally-recognized fields of law, medicine, commerce, and skilled trades. On the contrary, a number of other upper-middling professionals who established themselves in Virginia around the same time as the aforementioned individuals were derived from an array of less-accomplished immigrants who settled in the largely unsettled, northwestern part of the colony.<sup>135</sup>

These particular immigrants came not only from Europe, but from the neighboring colonies of Pennsylvania and Maryland as well. While many of them might have initially lacked the educational credentials and preexisting occupational experience of some of their classically-trained professional counterparts, they were hardly bereft of common sense, interpersonal skills, and sound work ethics. Therefore, as men within this group eagerly applied such traits to their new surroundings, they were ultimately presented with two fairly promising options.

The first option, which was admittedly easier to pursue for the leaders of large immigrant convoys, was to engage in one of the altogether new professions that were specifically tailored to settling and developing Virginia's unsettled western environs.

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<sup>135</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of Virginia's early immigration and ethnic-specific settlement patterns, particularly those in the western part of the colony, see David Hackett Fischer and James C. Kelly, *Bound Away: Virginia and the Westward Movement* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), chapters 1 and 2.

These types of niche-jobs were made available at the behest of both the Virginia government, which wanted to further fortify the western frontier, and FFV planters who wanted to survey their land grants and rent plots to new colonists. The second option—which will largely be addressed in a subsequent chapter concerning the activities of Virginia professionals within the context of war—materialized more as a result of lucky timing than anything else. More specifically, this option allowed for new colonists in the west to simply bide their time with small-scale farming until they or their sons received an opportunity to enter into the field of professional soldiery—something which naturally became much more accessible to members of their class at the beginning of the French and Indian War.

Just like classically-trained professionals who immigrated to Virginia, the niche occupations that some of these western newcomers specialized in were—at least initially—only as lucrative and numerous as their centrality to planters' needs and desires. More specifically, the more instances in which planters had to deal with business matters outside of their immediate realm, the more they had to rely upon middle-men to act on their behalf, thus providing more chances for such middle-men to make profits and improve their status. This was no more evident than what transpired in the Shenandoah Valley and western Virginia backcountry during the first half of the eighteenth century. As flocks of lower-class German, Swiss, Dutch, and Scotch-Irish immigrants established a number of important settlements in those regions and laid claim to the territory as their own, planters, who had been previously granted the lands by the King of England, were forced to deal with the local leaders of those newcomers if they hoped to secure future

speculative profits in western land sales and/or collect regular quitrents from the new settlers.

Virginia's elites had no one to blame but themselves for this development. Because many of the lands west of the Blue Ridge Mountains were formally claimed through massive land grants to planters like Lord Fairfax and Robert Beverly, but technically unsecured and unpatented by the owners, Governor William Gooch and his Council actually went out of their way to encourage the lower sort to inhabit the region, survey the territory, sell parcels of land, and found new settlements. By employing this approach, undeveloped land would be surveyed and the Virginia government and rightful landowners could obtain new sources of tax and quitrent income, respectively. Furthermore, as such encroachments would undoubtedly put French and Indian inhabitants of the Ohio region on notice about British sovereignty, "a buffer zone" of poor foreign Protestants would stand between hostile enemies and the rest of the colony.<sup>136</sup>

As Warren Hofstra has pointed out, this idea—which was largely the brainchild of William Keith, a former Pennsylvania Governor—seemed practicable at first. Keith, in fact, astutely observed that "persons of a low degree in life who are known amongst their equals to be morally honest and industrious" were much more capable of mobilizing their counterparts for such a buffer scheme than "those of greater wealth and higher rank who

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<sup>136</sup> Warren R. Hofstra, *The Planting of New Virginia: Settlement and Landscape in the Shenandoah Valley, Creating the North American Landscape* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 91-93. Hofstra also explores the Virginia government's concept of a Protestant white "buffer zone" in Warren R. Hofstra, *A Separate Place: The Formation of Clarke County, Virginia*, Clarke County sesquicentennial ed. (White Post, Virginia: Clarke County Sesquicentennial Committee, 1986), 1-24.

are ever liable to the suspicion and jealousy of the vulgar.”<sup>137</sup> However, what Virginia’s planter-dominant cadre of political officials did not envision was a buffer zone in which the newly recruited people of lower orders would essentially turn to the cream of their own ranks for care and guidance and subsequently operate for their own socioeconomic and political benefit—a scenario which actually materialized.

Thus, while a steady stream of middling, foreign Protestants flowed into western Virginia, planters who obsessed over land speculation and creating new income bases in that region were forced to deal with men like Jost Hite, Alexander Ross, Benjamin Borden, Jacob Stover, John Van Meter, James Patton, and William Preston, all of whom made names and fortunes for themselves in Virginia by serving as officially sanctioned surveyors, real estate brokers, and land settlement agents.<sup>138</sup> Granted, such jobs did not fall within the standard bounds of liberal professions as they might have been understood in European circles at the time. Moreover, there were obviously a number of Virginia planter-elites who greatly resented the fact that the fate of their western lands partially rested in the hands of men of much lower station. Yet, as these middling men started to take on such tasks, they eventually overtook an occupational role previously assumed by planters and accumulated enough money and elite connections to make social mobility a reality.

Every one of these individuals had relatively similar and productive experiences. Alexander Ross, for example, was an Irish-born Quaker whose primary occupation

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<sup>137</sup> William Keith to British Board of Trade, 6 April, 1730, quotation cited in Hofstra, *The Planting of New Virginia*, 91.

<sup>138</sup> For information relating to Hite, Ross, Borden, Stover, Van Meter, and Patton, as well as their families, see Hofstra, *The Planting of New Virginia*. For similar information on Preston, see Robert D. Mitchell, *Commercialism and Frontier: Perspectives on the Early Shenandoah Valley* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977)



throughout the early 1730s was to recruit at least one hundred Quaker inhabitants to lands the Virginia government had given him charge to survey and settle. Borden, Stover, and Van Meter were granted similar jobs for recruiting Irishmen, Germans, and Swiss immigrants into Virginia, respectively.<sup>139</sup> However, the cases of Hite, Patton, and Preston are even more indicative of how some upper-middling, niche-professionals were able to gain great rewards in western Virginia. Not only do their experiences shed broader light on the various hodgepodge of specialty professions spawned in the less-settled portions of the colony, but they also represent three distinct generations of professional growth within the region—growth which helped each man to establish a reputable legacy for his family. In other words, just like the Geddy, Mercer, and Nelson families did in different parts of the colony, the Hites, Pattons, and Prestons applied non-planting professions towards the formulation of their own formidable kin-networks and built enough wealth and influence as upper-middling colonists in the process to eventually warrant the acceptance of Virginia's old-guard planter class.

Prior to each of these men's arrival in Virginia, none of them held any sort of preexisting title that would have designated them among the colony's planters as respectable, much less elite. If anything, these men would have been viewed as middling sorts who could really only boast that status because the lower sort within their ethnic groups looked up to them as leaders. In fact, even though Hite was an enterprising landholder in Pennsylvania, who was held in high esteem by his fellow Germans, he basically lived the life of a colonial wanderer prior to his foray into Virginia. After initially entering America via New York in 1710, Hite and 2500 other Palatinates began

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<sup>139</sup> Hofstra, *The Planting of New Virginia*, 100-101, 40-41, 87-91.

to work as indentured servants, producing tar and pitch for the British Navy. The idea was that they would eventually work enough to pay off the transportation debt that they had incurred to reach the colonies. The tar operation faltered though, and once Hite realized the precariousness of their position, he decided to lead a group of his fellow German immigrants out of New York and into Pennsylvania.<sup>140</sup> Initially, it was only Hite's ability to bring a number of quitrent-paying Germans into the Shenandoah Valley that helped endear him to Virginia officials.

Even Patton and Preston, who were respectively one and two generations younger than Hite, were merely transplanted Irishmen of working-class descent. The familial roots that they built in Virginia came about only as the result of Robert Beverly's requests in the late 1730s and early 1740s for Scotch and Irish families to settle on his Shenandoah Valley acreage—a place Beverly referred to as Beverly Manor.<sup>141</sup> Patton, who was both an experienced shipping captain and William Preston's uncle, was fortunately called upon to be one of Beverly's primary European facilitators for shipping Irish families to the colony. Thus, when Patton convinced his brother-in-law and “ship carpenter,” John Preston, to also take part in the enterprise and settle his family on Beverly's lands in the New World, Preston's six-year-old son, William, was just another unknown and undistinguished foreigner making the “leap of faith” journey across the Atlantic Ocean, albeit by default.<sup>142</sup>

However, Hite, Patton, and Preston were all eventually able to overcome their middling backgrounds in Virginia because of two key factors. First, they were all

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<sup>140</sup> Hofstra, *The Planting of New Virginia*, 34.

<sup>141</sup> Mitchell, *Commercialism and Frontier*, 52.

<sup>142</sup> Tyler, *Encyclopedia*, I: 302, 309.

intelligent and hardworking individuals who knew how to think creatively to make money. Secondly, they built up a great deal of trust and influence among their associates, namely the immigrants they recruited into the colony and/or those planters for whom they sold land and collected quitrents for.

Hite, for example, was viewed by his fellow German inhabitants as such a prominent figure in their part of the colony that he was often referred to as the “Old German Baron.”<sup>143</sup> Given Hite’s background and his prior experiences in the colony, such a nickname might have initially seemed ironic. Nevertheless, the fact that Hite became the official liaison responsible for surveying and settling thousands of acres of Lord Fairfax’s real estate—a job that had been previously carried out in the Northern Neck by Fairfax’s longtime agent, Robert *King* Carter—it was, at the same time, a rather appropriate title. Plus, when one factors in all of the additional real estate commissions and profits that Hite was able to make for himself outside of Fairfax’s purview, it is clear that no matter how diminished Hite’s pedigree might have been in the eyes of his benefactor, he nevertheless became one of the wealthiest and most-respected men in that region of the colony. As Jost Hite’s sons and son-in-laws successfully emulated their father’s business activities throughout the eighteenth century, he founded yet another professional family tradition of note in Virginia.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> John Walter Wayland, *History of Shenandoah County, Virginia* (Genealogical Publishing Company, 1969), 703.

<sup>144</sup> Woody Holton, in describing the pre-Revolutionary activities of Jost Hite’s son Jacob, described him as “one of the wealthiest men in Berkeley County Virginia” and stated that “[Jacob Hite] was the son of a highly successful Shenandoah Valley land speculator and had hoped to replicate his father’s success farther west.” See Woody Holton, *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), xiii. Also, one of Jost Hite’s son-in-laws, George Bowman, was instrumental in working with his sons—almost all of whom took on surveyor/soldier professions—to make the Bowman family one of the most prominent and wealthy in the southwestern part of the colony. See Wayland, *History of Shenandoah*, 781.

Although Patton's life in Virginia was tragically cut short by an Indian attack only thirteen years after he immigrated to the colony, he also managed to make quite a name for himself and greatly improve his sociopolitical status in a short amount of time. In addition to his steady job as Beverly's Irish immigrant contact (and the lands he received in exchange for those services), Patton quickly learned how to turn his knowledge of both Virginia's western territories and Indians into a steady income and a colonelcy. As the 1751 financial ledgers of Virginia's government attest, Patton became a regular recipient of the colony's payroll. In addition to the pay he received from his colonel's commission, a variety of itemized services that Colonel James Patton provided to government officials in the western region of the colony were regularly reimbursed, including services as a surveyor, guide, and Indian translator, as well as fees for weeks of room, board, and stabling at Patton's quarters.<sup>145</sup> Considering that French incursions into the Ohio Country at that time had prompted Virginia Governor Robert Dinwiddie to take an acute interest in affairs extending beyond the Tidewater, men like Patton quickly became recognized in the colony as valuable service-providers who engaged in a vital and legitimate form of business.

Patton's nephew William Preston followed a similar path as a surveyor—a profession which earned him a very respectable amount of money, land, status, and political influence. As historian Robert Mitchell has noted, in the forty years that Preston lived in Virginia, he was deputy surveyor for Augusta County, a justice, surveyor, escheator, coroner, militia colonel, Burgess for Botetourt County, and one of the most influential and pioneering presences in establishing Montgomery and Fincastle Counties

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<sup>145</sup> Accounts Payable to Colonel James Patton, 16 September, 1751, Colonial Papers, *LVA*

prior to the American Revolution.<sup>146</sup> Furthermore, for the numerous planters who held out hope that the Proclamation Act of 1763 would eventually be dismissed in favor of free colonial development west of the Appalachians, Preston was considered a reliable agent for monitoring the situation along the restricted, but oh-so-promising western frontier.<sup>147</sup> Not only did Preston carry out the interests of numerous planters in terms of surveying and buying land on their behalf, but he also kept them abreast of squatter developments around the Proclamation Line and worked in tandem with the colonial government to gain legal sanction for pushing squatters off of the parcels that had already been claimed by planters through stock companies.

George Washington, for example, depended extensively on Preston in this capacity. Just like so many other big planters whose stockholdings in business enterprises like the Ohio Company had depreciated in light of the Proclamation Act, Washington realized that the longer it took to get permission to colonize further west, the greater chance he stood to lose money if hordes of poor white squatters settled on his western lands, claimed them as their own, and refused to either leave or pay rent. Even in early April of 1775, when Washington was surely contemplating the role that he would probably have to assume in the imminent conflict about to erupt between the American colonies and Great Britain, he still thought it important for Preston to inform him of all that was going on with regard to his business dealings in the west.

Just ten days before the Battle of Lexington and Concord took place in Massachusetts, Preston wrote to Washington. While Preston reported that he and a

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<sup>146</sup> Mitchell, *Commercialism and Frontier*, 52.

<sup>147</sup> For information on planters speculating in western lands and the numerous problems that they experienced in their efforts because of the Proclamation of 1763, see Holton, *Forced Founders*, 3-38.

fellow surveyor, Mr. Floyd, had recently come across three thousand choice acres (that he recommended Washington purchase), he also noted that the North Carolinian Richard Henderson, and his band of about “300 adventurers” were going to make life difficult for all interested parties in subsequent western speculation.<sup>148</sup> Henderson, according to Preston’s remarks, had negotiated a land treaty with the Cherokees for a “great and valuable country below the Kentucky” and was henceforth bent upon “sett[ing] up an independent government and form[ing] a code of laws for themselves” there since “the steps taken by the government” to stop the transaction from occurring had been too little and “too late.”<sup>149</sup>

Although little of the news that Preston conveyed in this letter boded well for Washington or his fellow speculators, Preston still managed to endear himself to Washington. That Preston continued to attend to Washington’s interests and inform him of what he was dealing with, in spite of negative setbacks, made Preston the kind of man whose indispensable services and loyalty were worthy of great and just financial rewards. As historian Lyon Gardiner Tyler remarked, these sorts of business relationships and the financial success attached thereto ultimately made William Preston “progenitor of a very distinguished Virginia family.”<sup>150</sup> And if Preston’s sons’ inheritances were any indication, Tyler was absolutely correct in his estimation. In 1792, nearly twenty years after the elder Preston consulted with Washington on the eve of the Revolution, William Preston Jr. requested a military commission from President Washington so that he could alleviate his boredom and sate an appetite for fighting western Indians. In his

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<sup>148</sup> William Preston to George Washington, 9 April, 1775. *The Papers of George Washington Digital Edition*

<sup>149</sup> William Preston to George Washington, 9 April, 1775.

<sup>150</sup> Tyler, *Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography*, Volume I, 309.

introductory comments, Preston Jr. gleefully acknowledged that through his father's previous "industry with a small addition of my own, my circumstances are not only comfortable, but easy."<sup>151</sup>

Although the successful networking and social climbing of these unique niche-professionals is impressive in its own way, what stands out is that they, like other more classically-trained professionals in the colony, accomplished much without having to make tobacco planting their number one pursuit. For instance, the primary means of employment for men like Hite, Patton, and Preston came from taking on an assortment of small jobs instead of practicing just one particular profession. They carried out the duties of surveying and land management, oversaw settlement operations, and tended to the responsibilities of minor political posts—most of which carried commissions for requisite services rendered. Frankly, since there were so few qualified people in their particular parts of the colony, such men and their family members also possessed the good fortune of knowing that from year to year, there would be little or no competition in getting elected to those positions.<sup>152</sup>

Lastly, as new employment opportunities in land speculation and ethnic settlement establishment prompted these niche professionals and their families to move from one place to another across western Virginia, an even bigger portion of their wealth was earned through the purchase and sale of land, which continued to appreciate in value well into the latter part of the century. For instance, the plantations that American Generals Horatio Gates and Charles Lee retired to after the Revolutionary War were sold

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<sup>151</sup> William Preston, Jr. to George Washington, 10 May, 1792, *GW Papers, Digital Edition*

<sup>152</sup> For some supplementary perspective on the nature and benefits of these professions as they specifically related to surveying, see Sarah S. Hughes, *Surveyors and Statesmen: Land Measuring in Colonial Virginia* (Richmond: Virginia Surveyors' Foundation and Virginia Association of Surveyors, 1979).

to them by those who had first surveyed, speculated upon, and bought such lands—the Hite family. Gates’ place in Berkeley County was actually “a very valuable tract of land in his neighborhood, of about two-thousand-seven-hundred acres” and Charles Lee’s home, which he renamed Prato Rio, was a three-thousand acre tract that had originally been purchased, improved, and called Hopewell by Jost Hite nearly forty years before.<sup>153</sup> Such developments over space and time indicate that these self-made, upper-middling professionals were men who always managed to contribute both their own well-being and their employers’ greater success because of their ability to do multiple things well.

Although all of these cases differ in various degrees, each and every one illustrates a unique way in which Virginia’s sporadic waves of middling immigration in the early eighteenth century contributed to a greater upper-middling, professional presence in Virginia. Moreover, as these examples are all weighed together, they illustrate an often overlooked, but important change within the demographic composition of early-eighteenth-century Virginia. While poorer European whites certainly turned away from immigrating to Virginia during this period and the culture of FFV planters was further reinforced within the preexisting white population, there was still a noticeable increase in the number of middling professionals who defied convention by coming into the colony and finding success outside of the domain of a tobacco plantation. Considering that the work of many of these immigrant professionals and their family members would henceforth undergird Virginia’s evolution into a more mature and economically sophisticated colony by the 1770s—one that non-coincidentally attracted

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<sup>153</sup> Charles Lee, *Memoirs of the life of the late Charles Lee, Esq.*, (1792), 7. America’s Historical Imprints Collection, UVA. Obviously since Patton died prematurely, his family did not see these land-sale profits in quite the same way that the Hite and Preston families did. For a brief observation on Preston’s success in these land-sale endeavors, see Mitchell, *Commercialism and Frontier*, 52-53.



and produced even more trained professionals in the years to follow—this trend ultimately stands out as one of the most crucial and formative in Virginia’s early history.

## CHAPTER IV

CRADLES OF PROFESSIONAL GROWTH: VIRGINIA'S CAPITAL, PORT-CITIES,  
AND MIDDLE TOWNS DURING THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

In April, 1767, Sarah and George Johnston placed an advertisement in *The Pennsylvania Gazette*. Their father, George Johnston, Sr. had passed away two years earlier; and as the estate had been recently appraised and probated, they were attempting to liquidate some of the surplus Virginia properties they had inherited.<sup>154</sup> Based on a number of indicators in both the estate appraisal and advertisement, Johnston Sr. had done quite well for himself. According to the final appraisal of his Fairfax County estate taken in February, 1767, Johnston Sr. owned 22 slaves, an immense book collection, and a substantial assortment of luxury goods, including fine silverware, several paintings, and a number of expensive furnishings. The *Esq.* title attached to his name and the self-portrait he had commissioned from a Williamsburg artist were also tangible testaments to his gentlemanly status.<sup>155</sup>

The advertisement's depiction of George Johnston Sr.'s residence further painted a picture of wealth and gentility. In addition to main dwelling house, which was described as "upwards of 100 feet long, with 6 fire places below the stairs," Sarah and George Jr. noted that the property possessed "another house, 36 feet long, with a fire place, a stable, milk-house, meat-house, office, and other houses, and a good garden; the

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<sup>154</sup> *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 16 April, 1767.

<sup>155</sup> Estate Appraisal of George Johnston, Esq., Fairfax County, Virginia, 11 February, 1767, Gunston Hall Library, Mason Neck, VA, Online Archives, <http://www.gunstonhall.org/library/probate/JHNSTN67.PDF> For a reference to Johnston Sr. commissioning portraits of himself and his family members in Williamsburg, see William Wirt Henry and Ainsworth R. Spofford, *Eminent and Representative Men of Virginia and the District of Columbia of the Nineteenth-Century*, (Madison: Brant and Fuller, 1893), 487.

whole enclosed with pails and brick.”<sup>156</sup> The entire property was also said to have been spread across 70 riverfront acres and “defended from the water by a stone wall.”<sup>157</sup> It was not difficult for potential buyers to realize that the home was stately, its former owner was privileged, and its scenic and convenient location was most desirable.

Considering that George Johnston Sr. was also a senior member of the House of Burgesses, his contemporaries would not have likely needed to evaluate the contents of his estate to realize he was well-to-do. In fact, George Johnston Sr. was one of the colony’s most well-known and outspoken critics of British taxation. Though he is often overlooked in the formative storyline of the American Revolution, Johnston Sr. was such a respected elder statesman by the 1760s that Patrick Henry specifically enlisted him to help draft, edit, and present the resolutions that undergirded Henry’s famous Stamp Act Speech of 1765. Especially since Henry’s controversial opinions promised to anger some fellow delegates and elicit accusations of treason, he knew that garnering Johnston Sr.’s support would lend significant credibility to his case.<sup>158</sup>

Given these facts, it would seem entirely logical for historians to categorize George Johnston Sr. as a member of Virginia’s planter class. On paper, he seems to have met all the presumed criteria. He was politically influential, independently wealthy, and he could afford to possess slaves, a fine house, and a number of other costly material possessions. Yet, for all of the pertinent, class-related information that can be gleaned from such sources, several understated facts remain buried beneath such details. For

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<sup>156</sup> *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 16 April, 1767.

<sup>157</sup> *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 16 April, 1767.

<sup>158</sup> Robert Douthat Meade, *Patrick Henry: Patriot in the Making* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1957) Meade notes that when Thomas Jefferson reflected on Henry’s speech, Jefferson specifically stated that “torrents of sublime eloquence from Henry, backed by the solid reasoning of Johnston” were what ultimately made the highly controversial speech an effective one, 169-173.

instance, Johnston Sr. was the son of Scottish immigrants and an early-to-mid eighteenth-century newcomer to Virginia whose primary occupation was as an attorney.

Additionally, his magnificent home and legal office were not situated on an isolated Fairfax County plantation, but in the thriving port-city of Alexandria.

Given what has already been established about the quirky immigration patterns of eighteenth-century Virginia and the way so many mid-to-upper-middling arrivals utilized professional expertise to build wealth and network with planters, certain aspects of Johnston Sr.'s background and experiences should not seem extraordinary. However, the information concerning Johnston Sr.'s upscale urban residence stands out as something worthy of further examination, particularly since Johnston was not the only professional in colonial Virginia who lived and worked in a non-agrarian environment. A deeper analysis of how and why that scenario materialized in the mid eighteenth century adds an intriguing, physical dimension to the narrative of non-FFV professionals and how they were able to come into the colony, ply their vocations, and establish themselves so successfully thereafter.

As long as Virginia remained a predominantly rural place where people continued to live far apart and focus on personal subsistence and tobacco production, the chances of professionals like George Johnston Sr. parlaying their occupational specialties into high status and fortune were somewhat hindered. Since professionals were engaged in providing the general public with various goods or services, one of the most crucial factors in sustaining their success in the colony was the development of small cities and towns. The more that people lived in or near such places, the more opportunities professionals had to build personal relationships with their neighbors and clients and

gainfully practice their particular trades. Although eighteenth-century Virginia never possessed a city as large as Boston, Philadelphia, or New York City, its network of small urban enclaves provided many opportunities for economic diversification and professional growth.

By the dawn of the American Revolution, most Virginians—with the exception of those living in the less-developed, western parts of the colony—had relatively convenient access to a nearby city or town. At such places, colonists could typically purchase goods from a merchant's store, inspect and sell their tobacco or wheat, seek medical and legal services, and/or commission the various labors of skilled artisans. In fact, as many newspaper advertisements of the mid eighteenth century attest, whenever a piece of Virginia property was described by a seller as being advantageous, convenient, or pleasantly-situated, the standard information that almost always followed was a list of the distances it took to reach the closest trading towns. In 1766, for instance, when Robert Brent advertised the sale of 8,000 acres in Prince William County, Virginia, he was quick to point out that “the advantages from [the property’s] situation are great,” primarily because of its proximity to “several trading towns on [the] Rappahannock and Potomac rivers” and the “excellent roads” that connected them all together.<sup>159</sup> Like so many others who published similar advertisements, Brent then went on to specify that his property was twenty-eight miles from Falmouth and Fredericksburg, thirty from Alexandria, sixteen miles from Colchester, and twelve miles from Dumfries, all of which were fairly manageable distances to travel.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 26 June, 1766.

<sup>160</sup> *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 26 June, 1766.

Even in the case of Virginia's Southside region, which has been specifically identified by historian Charles J. Farmer as a place which lacked developed towns in the colonial period, Richmond, Petersburg, and Williamsburg were all close enough to the area that Southside residents did not always have to feel they were living in a completely isolated, rural colony.<sup>161</sup> Additionally, by mid-century, as an increasing number of Scottish backcountry merchants began to dot even the most remote western areas of the colony with new stores, nearly all Virginia residents could claim at least some connection to the greater European and West Indian consumer markets.<sup>162</sup> Thus, while eighteenth-century Virginia was hardly overrun with busy streets, storefronts, and hordes of unskilled free laborers, it was developed enough to defy an exclusively rural, economically unsophisticated visage.

Arguably the most prosperous and thriving urban area in the colony by the 1770s, the colonial capital of Williamsburg was the closest thing Virginia had to a traditional city. It was neatly laid out in a grid, and the lots on its main thoroughfares were dotted with everything from residential dwellings to artisan shops to merchant stores, as well as medical and legal offices, and taverns. Moreover, Williamsburg was also home to the College of William and Mary, the Governor's Palace, and the chambers of both the Royal Council and the House of Burgesses, making it Virginia's preeminent center of politics, entertainment, education, and commerce.

Professionals were especially able to thrive in the midst of such surroundings. In the same place where Virginia's elected officials debated laws and enacted political

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<sup>161</sup> Charles J. Farmer, *In the Absence of Towns: Settlement and Country Trade in Southside Virginia, 1730-1800* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 1993).

<sup>162</sup> For an study related to merchants and colonial consumer culture in the Virginia backcountry, see Ann Smart Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods: Early Consumers in Backcountry Virginia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

policy, skilled contractors like James Wray, Humphrey Harwood, and Benjamin Powell built and repaired homes and public buildings within the city limits. Along the primary city streets where men like John Greenhow and William Holt ran merchant stores, attorneys such as St. George Tucker and Benjamin Waller prepared clients' cases in their legal offices. Additionally, as Drs. James Carter, William Pasteur, John Galt, and Philip Barraud operated apothecary shops and medical practices in Williamsburg, Edward and Richard Charlton styled wigs for wealthy patrons while Anthony Hay crafted specially customized cabinetry, woodwork, and furniture for a growing clientele.

Except for the already well-to-do Benjamin Waller, most of the aforementioned men were either middling immigrant professionals or—in the cases of John Galt and Philip Barraud—descended from families who had come to Virginia under difficult circumstances near the beginning of the eighteenth century. All of these professionals, however, moved to Williamsburg during the early-to-mid portion of the eighteenth century so that they could profitably practice their trades there.<sup>163</sup> And since wealthy planters often ventured into the city to attend legislative sessions, socialize with one another, or appear in small-claims' courts for merchant debts, the money that they spent on professional goods and services whenever they were in town allowed for Williamsburg's non-planting contingent to thrive financially and—by extension—make important sociopolitical connections.

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<sup>163</sup> For basic information on these individuals, their backgrounds, and their occupations, see their bios, which are accessible through the official website of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation <http://www.history.org> Accessed 6 February, 2013. For further information on the families of Dr. John Galt and Dr. Philip Barraud and the distressing circumstances which prompted their fathers' immigration to Virginia, see "Galt Family of Williamsburg," *WMQ*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (April, 1900), 259; and Lou Powers, "Dr. Barraud House Historical Report, Block 10, Building 1, Lot 19," Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library Research Support Series—1193 (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1990), 6.

In his study of eighteenth-century homes in Williamsburg, architectural historian Marcus Whiffen observes that many of the more regal homes, shops, and offices located along Williamsburg's main streets had clear connections to professionals. More specifically, they were either built by professionals for personal use or purchased by professionals from wealthy planters who sought to develop a number of residential suburbs within the city's limits. Williamsburg wheelwright and carpenter Benjamin Powell, for instance, built the small, but finely detailed "Powell-Hallam house for himself on York Street sometime between 1753 and 1760."<sup>164</sup> Just over a decade later, the wigmaker Edward Charlton "paid a considerable sum" of £240 towards purchasing an even larger and more luxurious Georgian home originally owned by the great FFV planter Colonel William Byrd.<sup>165</sup> Considering that many similar purchases were made by other builders, skilled artisans, doctors, lawyers, and merchants in the city, it is clear that by the middle of the eighteenth century, the commercial and physical makeup of Williamsburg was markedly professional and amenable to further occupational diversification.

In addition to its busy little capital, eighteenth-century Virginia also boasted two prosperous port cities in Norfolk and Alexandria. Both places provided similar opportunities for professional growth, particularly in the case of native-born general merchants and resident factors. And while Norfolk's establishment as an independent town in 1680 preceded Alexandria's by over half a century, the two eventually functioned

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<sup>164</sup> Marcus Whiffen, *The Eighteenth-Century Houses of Williamsburg*, Revised Edition (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1984), 255.

<sup>165</sup> Whiffen, *Eighteenth-Century Houses*, 162-164 and 164n.



in tandem to give the colony broad and convenient access to virtually any manner of trade the Atlantic World had to offer.<sup>166</sup>

Norfolk, which strangely was never much involved with the tobacco trade, became an important commercial center by facilitating trade with the West Indies and exporting Virginia timber, much of which was harvested from the Great Dismal Swamp. The city flourished and grew in this capacity; by the 1730s, it warranted its own set of provincial government officials. Additionally, as more sanitary and pleasing streetscapes began to compliment Norfolk's townhouses, wharfs, shipbuilding sites, and ordinaries, the city eventually became a bustling center of activity.<sup>167</sup> With regard to Norfolk's total population and the number of resident dwellings it boasted by the 1770s, the busy Virginia port even surpassed Williamsburg in size.<sup>168</sup>

Norfolk was also an important urban locale in that its appearance, function, and demographic makeup was so decidedly divorced from the plantation culture and social hierarchies that pervaded most of the colony. Williamsburg was a city that regularly catered to the social mores, recreational activities, and political lives of the colony's great planters. However, as T.J. Wertenbaker pointed out, Norfolk was "a thing apart from the

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<sup>166</sup> Gary Nash, "Social Development," in Jack P. Greene and J.R. Pole, *Colonial British America: Essays in the New History of the Early Modern Era* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984). Nash remarks that with the emergence of major commercial centers in the Chesapeake and Southern colonies like Baltimore, Annapolis, Norfolk, and Charleston, the region became increasingly more connected with the Atlantic World since its seaports were so accessible on the trade routes extending from Scotland, England, and Ireland to places like Newfoundland, the West Indies, and Africa. Furthermore, Nash considers the growth of such cities to be a symbiotic result of productive economic development in the western hinterlands, 247.

<sup>167</sup> Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, *Norfolk: Historic Southern Port* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1931), 7-13.

<sup>168</sup> For population statistics comparing Norfolk, Baltimore, Williamsburg, and Richmond on the eve of the Revolution, see Jacob M. Price, "Economic Function and the Growth of American Port Towns in the Eighteenth-Century," in Donald Fleming and Bernard Bailyn, eds., *Perspectives in American History, Volume VIII*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 163. For statistics on the number of residential dwellings in Virginia towns and cities, see Carville Earle and Ronald Hoffman, "Staple Crops and Urban Development in the Eighteenth-Century South," in Fleming and Bailyn, eds., *Perspectives in American History, Volume X*, 10.

rest of Virginia.”<sup>169</sup> More specifically, since Norfolk did not exclusively rely on the tobacco trade in order to thrive, the city’s residents cultivated their own unique image in relation to Virginia planters. Thus, while some Norfolk inhabitants “rivalled the landed aristocracy in wealth,” there were still “essential differences” between those who called Norfolk home and the plantation masters that professionals so often defined themselves in conjunction with.<sup>170</sup>

Norfolk’s most elite and influential citizens were not planters, but professionals. Wertenbaker wrote that within Norfolk’s city limits, “merchants, men of independent means, the clergy, and other professional men constituted the first class; ship-carpenters, coopers, turners, and other skilled artisans made up a highly respected second class; day laborers and indentured workers were grouped in a third class; while free negroes and slaves formed the fourth.”<sup>171</sup> For the time period, such a class pyramid was more analogous to New York, Boston, or Philadelphia than any other colonial settlement. Norfolk, therefore, was a place where professional colonists—most of whom would have normally represented a mid-to-upper-middling faction within Virginia’s greater social hierarchy—were the dominant masters of their own urban domain.

Because Alexandria was not founded until 1749, its development into a cosmopolitan center lagged in comparison to Williamsburg and Norfolk. In fact, Alexandria did not support a large professional contingent—beyond merchants—until after the American Revolution. Nevertheless, as Thomas Preisser and others have noted, Alexandria “dominated the trade of the [Potomac] River basin” and served as “the focal

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<sup>169</sup> Wertenbaker, *Norfolk*, 26.

<sup>170</sup> Wertenbaker, *Norfolk*, 26.

<sup>171</sup> Wertenbaker, *Norfolk*, 14.

point for the external trade of the lower Shenandoah Valley” for the entire second half of the eighteenth-century.<sup>172</sup> Thus, in the same way that Norfolk functioned on the colony’s southern coastline, Alexandria quickly became the colony’s major northern hub for importing European goods and African slaves and exporting Virginia’s tobacco, wheat, iron, and foodstuffs. Over time, these trading activities enticed more people to settle in the area, and “by 1770, [Alexandria’s] population exceeded 1,700 and it has completely eclipsed its Potomac rivals; no other town in the river basin was even half as large.”<sup>173</sup>

With so many people pouring into Alexandria and its surrounding areas, a greater demand for professional services followed. Although Alexandria grew between 1770 and 1790, the types of professionals most suited to realize success there during the town’s formative years were merchants. John Carlyle, for example, came to Virginia in 1741 as a fully-apprenticed supercargo for the firm of English merchant, John Hicks. About a decade after he had established and operated several stores on Hicks’ behalf, Carlyle moved his operations to Alexandria, built a fine home within the city limits, and became a successful merchant in his own right.

By all accounts, Carlyle was descended from a respectable Scottish family. Nevertheless, because John was the second of two sons in a world where primogeniture still held firm, he was, in the words of one historian, the child of the family who was born “without the [silver] spoon,” in his mouth.<sup>174</sup> Of course, this sort of story was applicable

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<sup>172</sup> Thomas M. Preisser, “Alexandria and the Evolution of the Northern Virginia Economy, 1749-1776,” *VMHB*, Vol. 89, No. 3, (July, 1981), 282-283. For an additional, brief analysis of colonial Alexandria, see chapter one in William Francis Smith and T. Michael Miller, *A Seaport Saga: Portrait of Old Alexandria, Virginia* (Norfolk, Va.: Donning Co., 1989).

<sup>173</sup> Preisser, “Alexandria,” 282-283.

<sup>174</sup> Jim Bartlinski, “A Tale of Two Continents: How Fortune and Ability Affected Two Brothers, Doctor George Carlyle of Cumberland County England, and John Carlyle of Alexandria Virginia,” *The Alexandria Chronicle*, Spring 2008 edition.

to many FFV planter progenitors of the mid seventeenth century. However, by the time Carlyle was born in 1720, most of the choice land and opportunities for planting in Virginia had already been appropriated by longer-established, native families. Much like *Scotch Tom* Nelson, therefore, Carlyle understood that his greatest chance for success was dependent on his ability to stake a professional claim in a tobacco trade that was getting too big for planters to manage alone.

Carlyle was not the only merchant in Alexandria taking advantage of those circumstances either. As Thomas Preisser has illustrated in his analysis of Virginia merchant, Harry Piper's letters, Alexandria had already turned into a frantic hotbed of commerce by the dawn of the American Revolution. Piper stated in 1771 that "the people here [in Alexandria] are running mad" and that "we have I dare say 20 stores and shops in this town and more are expected, so that goods is a great drug."<sup>175</sup> In light of such observations and the fact that Alexandria boasted at least eighty merchants and a growing number of other professionals by 1787, it is clear that in many of the same ways that Norfolk's environment fostered a separate sphere for professionals to grow and evolve on their own terms, outside of the typical planter's realm, so too did Alexandria.

Outside of Virginia's capital and middling port cities, its fall-line towns and smaller portside locales represented its next legitimate tier of urban centers. From a technical perspective, fall-line towns were situated along the north-to-south line of the colony where the navigable portions of Virginia's primary rivers gave way to a rockier, western interior. The initial purpose of fall-line towns was to serve as nothing more than minor connecting points of contact between Virginia's inland inhabitants and the trading

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<sup>175</sup> Quotation cited in Preisser, "Alexandria," 289.

vessels that could only partially navigate rivers like the James, Appomattox, Rappahannock, and Potomac. While notable fall-line towns like Richmond, Petersburg, Fredericksburg—and even smaller, non-fall-line ports like Urbanna and Tappahannock—were initially established as small, merchant-dominated settlements for colonists to sell tobacco and purchase retail goods, by the 1770s, they had grown substantially. Not only did these towns become diverse and more densely-populated over time, but they also developed into convenient centers for procuring more of the standard goods and services one would have mostly found accessible in only larger cities like Williamsburg and Norfolk.

Richmond grew so quickly between its settlement in 1737 and 1790 that it became Virginia's new capital and a popular new residential destination for professionals, many of whom saw in it a plethora of work-related opportunities. As historian Marie Tyler-McGraw notes, some of Richmond's first residents were professionals of fairly modest means who purchased lots from the town's primary founder William Byrd II in the hope that they could convince additional German and Swiss families to settle there. In addition to the coopers, blacksmiths, carpenters, tavern-keepers, and other lesser tradesmen who kept busy providing essentials to local tobacco merchants and travelers, two of these early Richmond residents were "Jacob Ege, a silversmith from Wurttemberg, Germany [and] Dr. Samuel Tschiffele, a German Swiss who "advertised himself as a 'chemist and practitioner of physic'."<sup>176</sup> While these sorts of men hardly constituted a sizeable or wealthy professional contingent during

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<sup>176</sup> Marie Tyler-McGraw, *At the Falls: Richmond, Virginia and Its People* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 48-50.

Richmond's early colonial years, they set the stage for Richmond to become an urban destination that was particularly amenable to professionals.

By the time of the American Revolution, Richmond was, all at once, the seat of the wartime government, an up-and-coming manufacturing center, and a fast-growing city that held enough promise to attract its fair share of artisans, lawyers, physicians, merchants, and real estate speculators in the years that followed. The Virginia merchant-planter, Richard Adams, for instance, made a fortune developing and selling residential plots in Richmond after the Revolution. Furthermore, as “merchants of more modest means” like David Lambert and Robert Mitchell, attorneys like John Marshall, and physicians like William Foushee moved into the town, built residences, and practiced their professions, Richmond morphed substantively into a professional-oriented city.<sup>177</sup> Professionals realized that if they could develop Richmond into a diverse center for business, manufacturing, and trade, the more central Virginia residents would choose to visit Richmond—instead of Williamsburg—as their place for conducting everyday business affairs.

Fredericksburg and Petersburg went through similar urban/professional evolutions. Charles Hamrick, for instance, stated in an analysis of George Weedon's popular and successful Fredericksburg tavern, that by 1763, the town “was a thriving community, and it served as a major entrepot for the growing trade with Britain and overseas in general.”<sup>178</sup> Moreover, since “Fredericksburg and its companion town of

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<sup>177</sup> Tyler-McGraw, *At the Falls*, 65-70. Carville Earle and Ronald Hoffman have also noted in a statistical analysis of urban residential dwellings in Virginia that Richmond had between 350 and 499 residences within its city limits by 1790. See Earle and Hoffman, “Staple Crops and Urban Development,” in Fleming and Bailyn, *Perspectives in American History, Volume X*, 10.

<sup>178</sup> Charles Hamrick, *A Bag-of-Nails: The Ledger of George Weedon's Tavern, Fredericksburg, Virginia, (1773-1791), a Transcript*. (Athens, Georgia: New Papyrus, 2007), ix.

Falmouth had the best connections with the more settled portions of the Piedmont and the Valley,” it was also an important center for facilitating elements of the colony’s domestic trade.<sup>179</sup> Indeed, as the activities of Fredericksburg professionals like Weedon, James Hunter, Charles Dick, Charles Yates, and Hugh Mercer attest, Fredericksburg was, by the 1760s, a very busy and economically diverse place, brimming with various professionals.

The Scotch merchant James Hunter (not to be confused with his younger cousin James) was one of many merchants who regularly conducted his business affairs in Fredericksburg. In addition to those activities, Hunter also ran a rather sizeable ironworks just outside of town in Falmouth.<sup>180</sup> Charles Dick, a successful merchant and potash manufacturer whose business acumen and substantial fortune earned him status and respectability among some of Virginia’s most elite planters, went a step further and established his own gun manufactory in Fredericksburg in the 1770s.<sup>181</sup> Although Hunter’s and Dick’s manufacturing enterprises during the Revolutionary War were not particularly profitable because of the state’s inability to fully compensate them for services rendered, the peacetime mercantile operations of both men helped make Fredericksburg a town that could provide a diverse number of goods and services to its residents and visitors alike. Especially in the case of Dick, who built what “is said to be

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<sup>179</sup> R. Walter Coakley, “The Two James Hunters of Fredericksburg: Patriots among the Virginia Scotch Merchants,” *VMHB*, Vol. 56, No. 1, (January, 1948), 5. For further reading on the profitable connections that Fredericksburg merchants made with Virginia’s western inhabitants, see William H. Siener, “Charles Yates, the Grain Trade, and Economic Development in Fredericksburg, Virginia, 1750-1810,” *VMHB*, Vol. 93, No. 4, (October, 1985), 409-426.

<sup>180</sup> Coakley, “The Two James Hunters”

<sup>181</sup> Charles Dick was involved in a plethora of professional activities outside of plantation management. For an analysis of his involvement with potash and gun manufacturing, respectively, see William I. Roberts, III, “American Potash Manufacture Before the American Revolution,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 116, No. 5, (October 13, 1972), 383-395 and “Fredericksburg in Revolutionary Days, Part III,” *WMQ*, Vol. 27, No. 4, (April, 1919), 248-257.

the first of the pretentious homes in Fredericksburg” around 1745, it is evident that his business was lucrative and his professional services were high in demand.<sup>182</sup>

Fredericksburg’s merchant-manufacturer types were not alone in their pursuit of professional success. As the credit and debit lists in Weedon’s tavern ledger indicate, his business thrived for many years. In fact, it was patronized with great frequency by a virtual “who’s who” of prominent Virginia planters and professionals, many of whom met with one another to socialize and informally discuss business affairs over food, drink, and billiards. Hamrick also notes that Weedon’s brother-in-law, Hugh Mercer, moved to Fredericksburg from Pennsylvania after the French and Indian War and “settled into a lucrative practice of surgery before becoming embroiled in the Revolution.”<sup>183</sup> Thus, it appears that other types of professionals aside from merchants, tavern-keepers, and manufacturers also viewed Fredericksburg as a promising environment for plying their trades.

The early experiences of men like John Hook, David Ross, and Jerman Baker suggest that Petersburg also underwent a period of professional development at the same time as its other fall-line counterparts. Hook, a fifteen-year-old son of a Scottish soap-maker when he arrived in Virginia around 1757, initially began his mercantile career in the section of Petersburg known as Blandford, where he served as a shopkeeper’s apprentice for the Donald firm of Glasgow.<sup>184</sup> While Hook had plans of eventually running his own chain of merchant stores, he could not help himself from constantly

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<sup>182</sup> Frances Archer Christian, Susanne Williams Massie, and Douglas Southall Freeman, eds., Reprint edition. *Homes and Gardens in Old Virginia* (Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing Co., 2006), 28.

<sup>183</sup> Hamrick, “*A Bag-of-Nails*,” ix.

<sup>184</sup> For a biographical summary of John Hook’s early years in Virginia, prior to his westward foray into Bedford County, see Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods*, 11-20.



contemplating just how many money-making opportunities were right at his fingertips in and around Petersburg.

In 1763, for example, after Hook informed friends and family in Scotland of his desire to eventually leave the employ of Donald family, he described “the great advantages” that could be gained for all interested parties if someone back home could just find a way to ship him a new store of consumer goods “that [would] suit the Virginia market.”<sup>185</sup> Shortly thereafter, Hook stated that in light of the immense commercial potential he saw in Petersburg and the surrounding area, he could “see nothing now to prevent [him from] making better remittances than the Norfolk men.”<sup>186</sup> Considering that David Ross also accumulated a considerable investment in Petersburg warehouses, stores, and mills and that Petersburg lawyer, Jerman Baker, wrote in 1771 that his “emoluments as an attorney, in fact, are not inconsiderable,” it appears that just like Fredericksburg and Richmond, Petersburg was gradually turning into the type of town that professionals of all sorts could live and thrive in.<sup>187</sup>

In many cases, the opportunities for professional growth in Virginia’s smaller towns even managed to transcend financial success and elevate one’s social rank. The immigrant merchant, James Mills, for instance, ran such profitable stores in the port towns of Urbanna and Tappahannock that his immense wealth eventually made him suitable enough in the eyes of FFV planter, Colonel William Beverly to wed his daughter,

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<sup>185</sup> John Hook to (Unknown), 1 August, 1763. John Hook Letterbook, 1763-1772, John Hook Records, *LVA*.

<sup>186</sup> John Hook to Henry Hook, undated. John Hook Letterbook, 1763-1772, John Hook Records, *LVA*.

<sup>187</sup> For a glimpse into the types of operations that Ross was involved with in Petersburg, see his correspondence with John Hook in John Hook Correspondence, 1772-1808, John Hook Records, *LVA*. Baker’s quote is taken from Jerman Baker to Thomas Adams, 24 December, 1771 in “Letters and Other Papers, 1705-1829,” *VMHB*, Vol. 23, No. 4, (October, 1915), 366.

Elizabeth.<sup>188</sup> And while Landon Carter initially scoffed at the rumors of Mills' success and claimed it "impossible" for a man to "live as extravagantly as [Mills] . . . by only carrying on the trade of a storekeeper," Carter eventually conceded that Mills had indeed gotten rich from his merchant stores and carved out a place of socioeconomic prominence among Virginia's planter elites.<sup>189</sup> After visiting with James and Elizabeth Mills in 1772, Carter remarked that "James will grow richer and his servants better, etc. and etc., for a while."<sup>190</sup>

It is also important to note that as the nearby port cities of Baltimore and Philadelphia continued to develop and diversify their trading and manufacturing capacities at their own accelerated paces, Virginians realized that they could gain a piece of the commercial market-share being generated by their neighbors to the north. This had major ramifications for professionals, particularly since merchants in Virginia's northwestern corridor increasingly saw themselves as being connected to both the foodstuff trade based in Philadelphia and the advanced iron-manufacturing centers operating in and around Maryland by the middle of the eighteenth century.

Alexander Henderson, a prominent Virginia merchant who primarily operated out of Occoquan and Dumfries, made some telling observations to that effect during his travels north in 1769. Because he had previously spent time running a store in Port Tobacco, Maryland for Glasgow merchant and future business partner, John Glassford, Henderson was no stranger to the Upper-Chesapeake and Mid-Atlantic colonies. Yet, Henderson wrote at length about how many things he fancied about the region's up-and-

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<sup>188</sup> Landon Carter and Jack P. Greene, ed., *The Diary of Colonel Landon Carter of Sabine Hall, 1752-1778*. (Richmond: Virginia Historical Society, 1987), 269n.

<sup>189</sup> Carter, *Diary*, 477.

<sup>190</sup> Carter, *Diary*, 729.

coming trade prospects. In addition to repeatedly commenting on how nice the ironworks were in Baltimore, (Snowden's, and Nottingham) as well as admiring how close they were to navigable waterways like the Chesapeake Bay, Henderson even marveled over how a simple Irishman living in Pennsylvania could reasonably expect to make a good living for himself by either growing and selling a Spanish variety of potato and/or selling rapidly appreciating pieces of urban real estate in the Philadelphia area. Clearly, Henderson saw unlimited possibilities for facilitating trade in the parts of Virginia with accessible proximity to Maryland and Pennsylvania.<sup>191</sup>

Moreover, as Henderson's speculative visions for the region increasingly turned into realities, towns in northern and northwestern Virginia like Dumfries and Winchester gradually developed into well-populated and busy trade centers that could work in tandem with their northern neighbors. Winchester grew more slowly, as its function in the Shenandoah Valley correlated primarily with Virginia's later shift away from tobacco cultivation in favor of cereal production.<sup>192</sup> The port of Dumfries, however, became a hotbed of growth and commercial activity well before the Revolution began. According to Henry J. Berkley, Dumfries, "in the time of its pre-revolutionary days of prosperity," actually "possessed a bank, a newspaper, *The Gazette*, and an academy for the teaching of its youth, as well as a considerable number of stores of various kinds, besides the extensive warehouses at the port."<sup>193</sup> Furthermore, as Berkley noted that Dumfries had

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<sup>191</sup> Alexander Henderson Travel Diary, 1769, CW Rockefeller Library Special Collections. Henderson's entries concerning both the Irishman planting and selling potatoes and the exceedingly high land values in Philadelphia were influenced by stories which had been told to him on his trip by a northern inhabitant who Henderson referred to as Mr. Biddle.

<sup>192</sup> For an account of Winchester's growth and professional connections to the grain market, see Hofstra, *The Planting of New Virginia*,

<sup>193</sup> Henry J. Berkley, "The Port of Dumfries, Prince William Co., Va.," *WMQ*, Second Series, Vol. 4, No. 2, (April, 1924), 110.

its own Jockey Club by 1770 and that FFV women like Lucinda Lee wrote to her friends about “going over to Dumfries to the opening of the social season next Tuesday night,” Dumfries was also considered cosmopolitan enough to occasionally entice big planters to leave their plantations for the fun and conveniences of a more upscale, urban atmosphere.<sup>194</sup>

Altogether, such progressive changes in Virginia’s cities and towns over the course of the eighteenth century allowed for professionals to make an already considerable impact much more meaningful for the long-term. Even in relation to the colony’s western sphere, Virginia’s small, but effective network of urban spaces connected professionals more readily to their clientele and subsequently provided them with opportunities to enhance their fortunes and social status. Additionally, as many professionals gravitated towards not only practicing their occupations in such places, but residing in them as well, professionals began to take a sincere form of ownership and interest in what would become some of the state’s most important and economically productive locales in the future.

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<sup>194</sup> Berkley, “The Port of Dumfries,” 112-113.

## CHAPTER V

“BROUGHT UP TO PROFESSIONS AS ARE MOST SUITABLE TO THEIR  
GENIUS: OCCUPATIONAL PROFESSIONALIZATION IN EIGHTEENTH-  
CENTURY VIRGINIA

Over the course of 1760, Drs. Alexander Reade, James Carter, and Arthur Lee collectively testified to the past, present, and future prospects of medical professionals in the Old Dominion. The first and oldest of these physicians, Dr. Reade of Middlesex County, was recently deceased. As a result, his sentiments on the value of professions were expressed in the final portion of his last will and testament. Prior to his passing, Dr. Reade had gained a solid reputation throughout Tidewater Virginia for his scientific knowledge and medical care. In fact, Reade’s practice, which for years was based in and around the counties of Gloucester and Middlesex, had flourished substantially enough by 1760 that Reade had ensured a favorable living and legacy for his immediate family. Medical historian Wyndham Bolling Blanton went so far as to declare that when Dr. Reade passed away, “he must have been one of the leading men of the county.”<sup>195</sup>

Based on the scattered bits of information that can be gathered on Dr. Reade, Blanton’s claims are largely substantiated. In addition to the large Urbanna home that Dr. Reade purchased in 1756, his estate inventory indicates that he also owned an impressive number of roughly 255 books and an array of costly household items, including numerous sets of china, silverware, and furniture.<sup>196</sup> The vestry book for

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<sup>195</sup> Wynham Bolling Blanton, *Medicine in Virginia in the Eighteenth-Century*, reprint of 1931 edition (New York: AMS Press, 1980), 380.

<sup>196</sup> Estate Appraisal of Dr. Alexander Reade, Middlesex County, Virginia, 3 January, 1760, Gunston Hall Library, Mason Neck, VA, Online Archives, <http://www.gunstonhall.org/library/probate/READE60.PDF> For a historical record of the home and property that Reade purchased in Urbanna, see Louise E. Gray,

Middlesex's Christ Church Parish also shows that Reade was wealthy enough to make occasional loans to the church.<sup>197</sup> Lastly, Reade owned a respectable amount of land. In assessing Reade's last will and testament, Blanton notes that in addition to the valuable material possessions Dr. Reade passed down, he also "left a very large estate in Virginia" to his family as well as "houses in the Town of Bedford, in Bedfordshire, Great Britain."<sup>198</sup>

Admittedly, Reade's success and material possessions were not exclusively attributable to the proceeds of his medical practice. During the mid seventeenth century, the progenitors of the Reade family (who were already well-distinguished in England) settled in York County, Virginia and made sound connections with planters in the years that followed. As various members of the Reade clan gradually increased their status and holdings by marriage and securing a number of advantageous political positions, the Reades gained plantation holdings in and around York County and aligned themselves with many members of Virginia's planter *aristocracy*. It is therefore safe to say that while Dr. Reade gained financial stability and respect on the basis of his own work, he also benefited from these alliances.<sup>199</sup> Reade's voluminous library alone suggests that he received a formal and costly European education. Furthermore, his scheme to establish himself independently in Urbanna, across the river from his family's home county of

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Evelyn Q. Ryland, Bettie J. Simmons, Richard A. Genders and Walter C.C. Johnston, ed., *Historic Buildings in Middlesex County, Virginia: 1650-1875* (1978), 48 and 62-63.

<sup>197</sup> Churchill Gibson Chamberlain, *The Vestry Book of Petsworth Parish, Gloucester County, Virginia: 1677-1793* reprint edition (Genealogical Publishing Company, 2009), 397. Chamberlain notes that *The Vestry Book of Christ Parish Church* indicated that on October 1, 1747, the parish owed Dr. Reade a sum of 374 pounds of tobacco.

<sup>198</sup> Blanton, *Medicine in Virginia*, 380.

<sup>199</sup> "Reade Family," *WMQ*, Vol. 14, No. 2, (Oct., 1905), 117-125.

York, would have required either a substantive amount of savings or some reputable business connections.

However, to say that Dr. Reade was a practicing member of Virginia's planter *aristocracy* would be misleading. Unlike so many wealthy Virginia planters, Reade only owned nine slaves at his death. And although he did own livestock, land, and horses, his primary residence in the town of Urbanna suggested a closer connection to Virginia's commercial sector than it did to running a plantation.<sup>200</sup> Regardless of what Dr. Reade and his forefathers may have owed to their alliance with Virginia's planter class, there was a decidedly professional bent to Dr. Reade's personal experiences in Virginia, as well as what he expected for his sons after he was gone.

When Reade's executors tended to his final affairs in 1760, the doctor left behind a posthumous message that specifically addressed the occupational fulfillment of his sons' lives. Although Reade assigned guardianship of his sons to two of the wealthiest FFV planters in his county, Ralph Wormeley and Christopher Robinson, he made no mention of sending his boys abroad for their education or molding them into the types of planters and estate managers that so many *aristocratic* Virginia sons were conditioned to become. On the contrary, Dr. Reade explicitly requested that his boys be sent to William and Mary for their educations and that they would be "brought up to such professions as are most suitable to their genius."<sup>201</sup> Not only were Dr. Reade's greatest expectations for his sons' futures in Virginia connected to professional education and growth, but the implication behind such clearly worded expectations was that such pursuits were honorable and profitable enough to allow his sons to prosper in the colony.

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<sup>200</sup> Dr. Alexander Reade, Estate Appraisal

<sup>201</sup> Blanton, *Medicine in Virginia*, 380.

The second of the aforementioned physicians, Dr. James Carter, was not as old or well-established as Dr. Reade. Carter was still an up-and-coming, relatively recent arrival to Virginia at the moment of Reade's passing. An English immigrant who was no relation to the Carter family of FFV renown, Dr. Carter came to Williamsburg around 1750 and set up a small apothecary shop and medical office.<sup>202</sup> In the decade that followed, he became a respectable beneficiary of the commercial traffic and patronage which the growing capital city provided to its business owners.

When Dr. Carter paid Colonel John Tayloe a sum of £600 in April of 1760 for two vacant building lots in the center of Williamsburg, the doctor's intentions were that of a middling professional on the rise. He and his wife Hester had arrived in Virginia with few means and no major planting connections. Yet, in the meantime, the young doctor had established a proven, sustainable medical practice and shop and secured the funds necessary to buy a new home site and business location consistent with such success.<sup>203</sup>

The third and final physician, Arthur Lee, had not yet become a doctor in 1760. However, he stood ready to embark on a profession-oriented journey which promised to enhance his family's already substantial planting fortune. Although Lee's direct descent from a notable FFV line had already afforded him numerous socioeconomic advantages, in January, 1761, he prepared to take an extended trip to the University of Edinburgh to begin studying medicine. Considering the Lee family's longstanding commitment to planting and estate management, the new professional avenue that young Arthur pursued

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<sup>202</sup> Blanton, *Medicine in Virginia*, 35.

<sup>203</sup> Bond, James Carter of Williamsburg to John Tayloe of Richmond County, 21 April, 1760. Tazewell Family Papers, *LVA*, Folder 3.



represented a noticeable departure from the culture and experiences of his forefathers. For while the only accredited professional experience most Virginia planters could boast in the decades before came from part-time military service or the modest legal credentials earned by short visits to the British Inns at Court, Lee gave the impression that he wished to become a full-time physician.

In addition to Arthur Lee's medical studies, he demonstrated a willingness to put his newfound knowledge to practical use in the workaday world. Shortly after arriving in Edinburgh, Lee "accepted part-time and summer employment with an apothecary, the modern equivalent of a druggist, and he moved into a rent-free room above the shop."<sup>204</sup> As A.R. Riggs and Edward Riley note, "Lee's [ultimate] object [at this stage of his life] was to take a degree and proceed to post-graduate study in medicine."<sup>205</sup> Considering that Lee also became greatly concerned with improving the state of medical care in Virginia, encouraging licensure reform for physicians, and preventing European universities from awarding *in absentia* medical degrees, it is clear that he initially sought to bring greater legitimacy to an occupation that he planned to profitably practice back home in Virginia.<sup>206</sup>

As individuals, Reade, Carter, and Lee differed on numerous levels. They were of different ages and residents of different counties. Moreover, their backgrounds, connections, and professional priorities contrasted. Reade undoubtedly associated

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<sup>204</sup> A.R. Riggs and Edward M. Riley, eds. *The Nine Lives of Arthur Lee, Virginia Patriot* (Williamsburg: Virginia Independence Bicentennial Commission, 1976), 12.

<sup>205</sup> Riggs and Riley, *The Nine Lives*, 12.

<sup>206</sup> Although William Shippen Jr. later claimed that Lee was "a good physician," Arthur Lee ultimately disliked being a country doctor in Virginia, especially since his practice there was boring and provincial in comparison to what he had experienced in Scotland and England. Consequently, Lee decided to change professions and studied to become a lawyer. For details concerning Shippen's remarks and these changes in Lee's occupational pursuits see, Riggs and Riley, *The Nine Lives*, 17-18 and 24-25.

himself with the planter class, but only because he used his family's socioeconomic advantage to establish himself as a regularly practicing physician. Carter, who had far fewer connections and less money, represented a self-made man flourishing in a more urban locale. Lastly, because of Arthur Lee's preexisting fortune, subsequent career changes, and immediate FFV relations, it is fair to say that he was a wealthy planter-professional, continually in search of a suitable occupation. Yet, regardless of the differences between the three, each man in 1760 still exemplified an increased appreciation that Virginians had developed for non-planting professions over the previous fifty years, as well as the numerous possibilities that existed in the colony for professional growth.

While an influx of mid-to-upper-middling immigration and gradual urban development combined to make eighteenth-century Virginia amenable to fortune-seeking professionals, the final ingredients which made the colony sustainable for such colonists were the changing nature and public perceptions of their individual occupations. Increasing levels of demand and professionalization in the fields of law, medicine, commerce, manufacturing, and skilled labor resulted in an equally increasing number of ways for professionals to make more money, gain respect from planter-elites, and achieve higher sociopolitical status.

Thus, just as Carl Bridenbaugh once noted that in colonial Virginia, "wealth guarantee[d] status; status convey[ed] privilege, [and] privilege ensure[d] power," a new professional variable was increasingly incorporated into the first portion of this

equation.<sup>207</sup> Previously—as the ascendance of FFVs during the late seventeenth century attest—the most reliable way Virginians had gained great wealth was through tobacco planting and sporadically dabbling in professional pursuits. However, as more professionals immigrated into the colony and increasingly practiced their occupations profitably full-time, the less true such old assumptions became. As the eighteenth century wore on, more and more men joined the colony’s elite ranks by plying their professions, not solely overseeing tobacco plantations.

Because the legal profession in Virginia underwent such a substantive occupational evolution throughout the greater part of the eighteenth century, it stands out as one of the most promising and lucrative professions that upper-middling colonists pursued outside of tobacco planting. However, before one can start to understand colonial Virginia’s lawyers, a few present assumptions about the legal profession must be cast aside. Although lawyers in present-day America are all tested and licensed, regulated by state bar committees, and actively litigating or trying cases in court, lawyers were not officially recognized or licensed by colonial Virginian officials until the 1730s. In fact, most of Virginia’s legal matters before that point rested with the county courts, bodies predominantly overseen by planter-justices. These justices, most of whom had little to no knowledge of law or proper court procedures, simply made rulings on whatever cases colonists brought before them.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Carl Bridenbaugh, *Myths and Realities; Societies of the Colonial South* (Baton Rouge,: Louisiana State University Press, 1952), 15.

<sup>208</sup> A.G. Roeber, *Faithful Magistrates and Republican Lawyers: Creators of Virginia Legal Culture, 1680-1810* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981). For further information on the nature of legal proceedings in early Virginia, see John Ruston Pagan, *Anne Othwood’s Bastard: Sex and Law in Early Virginia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

Moreover, colonists often decided to act as lawyers themselves during Virginia's early history by personally making arguments before the bench. In the words of the Virginia planter-lawyer and historian Robert Beverly, "every one that pleases may plead his own cause, or else his friends for him, there being no restraint in that case, nor any licensed practitioners in the law."<sup>209</sup> Some Virginians went so far as to shun attorneys entirely and demonize them as money-grubbing opportunists, a characterization with more than a century's worth of roots in Europe.<sup>210</sup>

These facts, of course, are not meant to imply that no one had legitimate legal credentials in Virginia before the 1730s. Nor are they meant to insinuate that having a legal background instantly meant a tainted status in this early period, particularly since many of the colony's better-educated people saw having legal credentials as quite respectable. There was, however, a lot of unresolved ambiguity and informality concerning the place and function of lawyers in early Virginian society. Furthermore, as it took more than a century for Virginia officials to decide how to suitably license lawyers and regulate their profession, Virginians' initial aversion to attorneys testifies to how much the occupation eventually grew and professionalized within the colony.

By the 1740s, such ambiguity and informality was fairly well resolved, and the practice of law was widely recognized and officially sanctioned in Virginia as a necessary and worthy profession. Additionally, as Virginia's commercial development and westward land speculation steadily created a great demand for legal services, large

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<sup>209</sup> Robert Beverly and Charles Campbell, ed. *The History and Present State of Virginia in Four Parts*, reprinted from the author's second revised edition, London, 1722. (Richmond, Virginia: J.W. Randolph, 1855), 208.

<sup>210</sup> References on negative European attitudes towards lawyers, particularly those in England, can be found in Alan M. Smith, "Virginia Lawyers, 1680-1776: The Birth of an American Profession," unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, (Johns Hopkins University, 1967), 280; and Roeber, *Faithful Magistrates*, 18-19.

numbers of Virginians—especially planters and merchants—increasingly looked to lawyers to represent their interests in both county and city courts. That demand alone enabled eighteenth-century Virginia lawyers to transform their profession into something entirely different from what their predecessors had witnessed the century before.

How exactly did this transformation occur though, and what role did Virginians of mid-to-upper-middling status play in bringing it about? Ironically enough, before such men began to break old traditions and actively pursue legal careers in Virginia, it was planters who first attempted to transform the colony's legal culture into something that was both viable and official. Particularly after 1680, if a Virginia planter was wealthy enough to afford sending his son overseas for a formal education in England, it was preferable that the young man attend meetings at the Inns of Court as a means of rounding out his curriculum. Involvement with these associations—which were established to formally train and oversee British barristers and solicitors—gave elite Virginians a chance to not only learn more about basic legal philosophy and court procedures, but also establish good relations with British business partners or patrons who regularly attended such meetings.<sup>211</sup> Furthermore, planters realized that if their sons were able to add legitimate legal credential to their families' resumes, it gave them even more of an advantage in their dealings with neighbors back home. As Alan Smith so aptly summarizes, "Virginia planters often sought to learn enough law to conduct their own affairs without creating a new class of lawyers."<sup>212</sup>

However, as prudent as it might have initially seemed to promote the legal training of their sons for their own devices, some of the ways in which Virginia planters

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<sup>211</sup> Roeber, *Faithful Magistrates*, 24-31.

<sup>212</sup> Smith, *Virginia Lawyers*, 13.

went about it ultimately backfired in favor of the colony's middling contingent. To begin with, even if a young Virginian from an elite planter family was fortunate enough to gain membership into one of the Inn's Inner Temples, he was still far from a regularly practicing trial-attorney when he returned home. Actually, the vast majority of the planters affiliated with the Inns of Court were lawyers in name only, who simply wished to apply their legal knowledge to the creation and interpretation of governmental policies and/or argue the occasional grand jury case on behalf of their family or close friends. In the fashion of aristocratic English barristers who deemed the duties of common attorneys (i.e. client contact, data collection, investigation, and paperwork) to be beneath them, Virginia's early planter-lawyers scoffed at the idea of becoming true, full-service lawyers who dealt with the general public.<sup>213</sup>

As Charles Sydnor argued, a lawyer in early colonial Virginia "enjoyed an advantage in making a political career provided he was connected by family and other ties with the ruling class. But it was not the practice of law so much as the study of the history of law, especially constitutional history, and of political philosophy that distinguished this generation of Virginia statesmen."<sup>214</sup> As long as these planter-lawyers remained committed to studying the history of law and refused to take on the everyday cases and high workloads that would require them to practice law regularly, the colony was left with a shortage of men qualified to provide inhabitants with sufficient legal counsel. Consequently, as a number of middling men in the colony realized an opportunity to fill this void and make decent livings in the process, they aspired to

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<sup>213</sup> Smith, *Virginia Lawyers*, 299.

<sup>214</sup> Charles S. Sydnor, *Gentlemen Freeholders: Political Practices in Washington's Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1952), 7.

become full-time, service-oriented lawyers who could adequately meet colonists' most basic legal needs.

However, this disinclination among Virginia's early planter-lawyers' to regularly practice law was not the only contributor in encouraging less-privileged colonists to pursue legal careers. One of the most crucial ways in which this occurred was when planter-lawyers' procrastinated in their efforts to promote greater professionalization and regulation of the legal profession within the colony. Such procrastination ultimately presented others with a valuable window of opportunity to meet the colony's growing demand for legal services. Because many of these same planter-lawyers who belonged to the Inns of Court grew frustrated with the lack of professionalism they witnessed in Virginia's county courtrooms, they endorsed a bill in 1732 that provided for both the official testing and licensing of lawyers and the regulation of their practices and fees. As this bill contained a provision that exempted previously accredited attorneys from having to take the test, the bills' primary supporters saw no apparent way in which the new policy would harm their prior positions as the colony's legitimate legal custodians. If anything, they figured that it would strengthen their power and standing by making even fewer people eligible to practice law in the years to come.

Lastly, since both the suitability of future candidates and the exams for licensure were to be overseen by members of the General Court in Williamsburg, most all of whom were planter-lawyers, the members of the planting class could easily get themselves and their sons licensed through their political connections. In fact, if a well-connected planter's son had sufficiently established a favorable relationship with the members of the General Court ahead of time, the bar exam he could expect to take would have been a

mere formality in comparison to what someone of lesser standing would have taken. Outside of being able to recite some basic and essential points of law from classic, widely-recognized texts, little else was technically required of *well-bred* men to pass the exam.

However, there were several problems with this law. First, the law simply came too late. There were already a significant number of middling county attorneys without official training who were actively reading and practicing law on their own throughout the colony. These men essentially had the same immunity to the test as their more classically-educated counterparts. Moreover, they could continue to practice law as long as they could show proof of previous experience to the General Court. This presented the colony's middling faction with a loophole to exploit; and even though the 1732 law did prevent a decade's worth of less-privileged men from learning law on the job, the colony's preexisting contingent of middling county lawyers represented a large enough presence to successfully agitate against the law. In 1742, at the behest of angry, senior county lawyers, the 1732 licensure act was repealed in favor of simply making attorneys take oaths of honor as they had done years before. By the time an equally angry group of planter-lawyers brought the issue of licensure back to the fore in a revised 1745 law and made bar exams even more difficult to pass, their efforts had already been significantly delayed and diluted by the county lawyers' resistance.<sup>215</sup>

Secondly, neither of the planter-lawyer inspired laws made any provision for attaining membership with the British Inns of Court. Therefore, even though the standards might have been tightened over time, virtually any man who was intelligent

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<sup>215</sup> For a detailed account on the evolution of Virginia's regulatory laws on the legal profession, see Smith, *Virginia Lawyers*, 290-298.



enough to study some law books and pass the colony's bar exam was eligible to become a licensed attorney in Virginia. And while these higher standards certainly prevented most poor and uneducated Virginians from practicing law beyond 1745, there was little that elite planter-lawyers could do to stop an increasing number of relatively well-educated, middling men—many of whom were descended from either newly arrived immigrants or middling, native planter families—from joining the fray by mid-century. Therefore, as increasing numbers of middling colonists began to undertake their basic education and legal training in Virginia and pass the bar, many established high-volume practices that dealt with all sorts of small claims. Consequently, these newer attorneys essentially transformed Virginia's legal culture into something that was just as practical and service-related in nature as it was philosophical and political.

In 1768, for instance, colonist Thomas Skinner demonstrated how these changes in Virginia's legal profession had allowed for more non-elite Virginians to seek and afford legal counsel. After putting a notice in *The Virginia Gazette*, in which he asked all individuals indebted to him to make their overdue remittances, Skinner swore to take legal action if his demands were not promptly met. More specifically, Skinner threatened that if he was not paid, he would put things “into the hands of an attorney, which will be very disagreeable.”<sup>216</sup> Forty years before, Skinner would have most likely had to make his own case in front of a county justice who knew more about planting than law. Yet, in 1768, Skinner expressed confidence in his ability to procure independent, legitimate legal counsel, the likes of which would not have likely come in the form of a wealthy planter's son who attended the Inns at Court. Likewise, Skinner's invocation of attorneys as a

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<sup>216</sup> Purdie and Dixon's *Virginia Gazette*, 4 August, 1768.

scare-tactic indicated his appreciation for the everyday, service-oriented function that lawyers were serving more frequently in his society. To be sure, Virginia lawyers may have still been considered parasitic or displeasing to work with, but there was no denying that they could help a man like Skinner collect what he was fairly owed. That fact alone spoke volumes.

Actually, when one looks at Alan Smith's data on the number of Virginia attorneys who attended the Inns of Court between 1674 and 1776, this change in the nature of Virginia lawyers' occupations is even clearer. Of the 61 lawyers that Smith identifies, only a small number of them were actually planter-lawyers who belonged to the British Inns of Court and rarely practiced; well over half of those men were FFV descendants. Conversely, numerous other Virginia attorneys of the period, many of whom came from less elite backgrounds, would be more accurately classified as regularly-practicing county attorneys who did not attend the Inns.<sup>217</sup> Thus, even by the time that the College of William and Mary started to provide planter-elites with a cheaper domestic alternative to the Inns of Court around the mid-1700s, both the type of law that their sons studied and the ways in which they were taught to apply their legal knowledge were decidedly different than they had been decades before.

Moreover, as "those who entered the [legal] profession could depend upon financial rewards," as well as opportunities for political advancement, middling European immigrants and the sons of small planters could, in fairly quick fashion, transform themselves into upper-middling lawyers who were capable of rapid, upward social

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<sup>217</sup> Appendix H, "Virginians at the Inns of Court," in Smith, *Virginia Lawyers*, 368-376.

mobility.<sup>218</sup> James Power, Peter Lyons, Patrick Henry, and Edmund Pendleton, all of whom were eventually considered politically-active gentlemen of the first order, attest to this trend. Power, an Irish immigrant, came to Virginia in the 1730s, before the acts governing lawyers were agreed upon. Lacking preexisting Virginia relations and possessing little more than a basic legal knowledge and sound debating skills, Power obtained a license and quickly established himself as an “eminent lawyer” in King William County.<sup>219</sup>

Thereafter, Power earned the trust and affection of his grateful clients and neighbors, so much so that he was elected to several terms in the House of Burgesses. This, in turn, made it possible for Power’s future son-in-law, Peter Lyons, to emigrate from Ireland in the late 1750s and study the law under a Virginia relative who had already built solid connections within the colony.<sup>220</sup> Lyons, who initially began work as a lower-tier, full-service county lawyer, subsequently had little trouble building upon those connections, climbing the career ladder, and earning a spot on Virginia’s General Court.<sup>221</sup>

The experiences of Patrick Henry and Edmund Pendleton also attest to how legal professionalization in Virginia helped middling colonists improve their social status and financial holdings. As esteemed as Henry and Pendleton became in the years leading up to the American Revolution, it is often forgotten that neither man came from a particularly privileged background. Henry’s father, John, was a well-educated, but middling, immigrant planter from Scotland whose greatest early success in Virginia was

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<sup>218</sup> Smith, *Virginia Lawyers*, 23.

<sup>219</sup> Tyler, *Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography, Volume I*, 307.

<sup>220</sup> Tyler, *Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography, Volume I*, 307.

<sup>221</sup> Frank L. Dewey, *Thomas Jefferson, Lawyer* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1986), 2.

that he married a Virginia wife of fairly respectable stature and gained some land and slaves in the process. Unlike his father though, Patrick Henry failed at virtually every occupational endeavor he tried before he decided to pursue a law career in the late 1750s.<sup>222</sup>

Pendleton's situation was even worse, since both his father and grandfather died in the year that he was born, thus leaving the boy "without paternal care and apparently without property."<sup>223</sup> Edmund's only real break in his childhood came about when family friend and Caroline County clerk, Benjamin Robinson, took pity on the child at the age of fourteen and gave him a meager apprenticeship opportunity.<sup>224</sup> In short, neither Henry nor Pendleton had much handed to them in their early years.

For both men, the new, service-based changes to Virginia's legal profession provided a way out of despair and financial ruin. It gave them an opportunity to work with all sorts of people, particularly well-to-do planters. Moreover, it enabled these men to make a respectable living and showcase their keen intellects in front of those who had the power to someday promote them. In fact, Henry and Pendleton were both so successful in their county practices that it did not take long before they were widely recognized in the colony and considered worthy enough by their wealthier planter counterparts to sit on the General Court. Henry ran such an incredibly busy and lucrative practice during the 1760s that "he was handling over six hundred cases" over the course

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<sup>222</sup> Robert Douthat Meade, *Patrick Henry: Patriot in the Making* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1957), 3-34 and 75-92.

<sup>223</sup> Thomas P. Abernethy, "Edmund Pendleton," *Dictionary of American Biography*. Base Set. American Council of Learned Societies, 1928-1936. Reproduced in History Resource Center. (Farmington Hills, MI: Gale), Accessed 20 July, 2010, *UVA*. For a thorough analysis of Pendleton's law practice and the types of clients he commonly served, see Edmund Pendleton and David John Mays, *The Letters and Papers of Edmund Pendleton, 1734-1803* (Charlottesville,: Published for the Virginia Historical Society [by] University Press of Virginia, 1967).

<sup>224</sup> Abernethy, "Edmund Pendleton," *Dictionary of American Biography*.

of just one year.<sup>225</sup> Without the growth and development of the legal profession in eighteenth-century Virginia, Patrick Henry and Edmund Pendleton would have likely just been run-of-the-mill colonists with far fewer opportunities for socioeconomic advancement.

Growing demand and advances in the medical profession also gave physicians a growing sense of respectability and self worth in eighteenth-century Virginia, albeit in a less uniform fashion. In fact, out of all the occupations that underwent substantive professionalization in eighteenth-century Virginia, doctors might have faced the most difficult path to success, even though the general health and well-being of colonists depended on their continued care. More than a few doctors in Virginia found it difficult to support their families with a medical income alone, particularly since supplies and medicines were so expensive and less wealthy patients could not always provide sufficient payment for their treatment. Moreover, the standard medical practices and implements of the time were archaic by modern-day standards and, in many ways, not far improved from what had been put to use during the seventeenth century. Consequently, some colonists still retained the old associations made between doctors and *quack* barbers.

However, as medical historians W. L. Old and Claiborne Fitchett note, Virginia's doctors during the eighteenth century "generally became better educated" and the colony's surgeons "began to raise up above the status of barber[s] and bonesetter[s]."<sup>226</sup> As a result, the medical profession experienced a progressive improvement in perception

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<sup>225</sup> Smith, "Virginia Lawyers," 28.

<sup>226</sup> W. Levi Old, Jr. and Claiborne W. Fitchett, *Surgery and Surgeons in Virginia, 1607-1995: A Historical Monograph*, (Norfolk, Virginia: Eastern Virginia Medical School, 1997), 3.

as time went on, particularly when more foreign-born, European-educated physicians like Paul Micou, George Nicholas, John Galt, William Cabell, James Craik, John Mitchell, and William Fleming, among others, moved to Virginia to set up practices. The credentials and advanced expertise of such immigrants bolstered the overall image of doctors in the colony and set higher standards by association for any native Virginians seeking to gain entry into the field thereafter.<sup>227</sup>

Additionally, as more and more Virginia physicians received better training and gained more experience with patient care, they eventually took it upon themselves to push amateurish pharmacists and apothecaries out of business by starting operations that combined doctor's offices and apothecary shops. This move not only helped doctors from a financial perspective—since it enabled them to grow their practices and attract a wider clientele—but it also allowed for doctors to better control and perpetuate further medical education in the colony. Since most Virginia doctors continued to learn the trade via apprenticeship (until the last quarter or so of the eighteenth century), practicing doctors who also assumed apothecary roles were rather prominent in the years before planters more frequently began to send their sons to accredited medical schools in Europe. The hybrid apothecary shop and medical office of Williamsburg physician Dr. George Gilmer, for instance, was both a successful business and a prime learning center for medical apprentices like Dr. Thomas Walker and Dr. William Pasteur, both of whom went on to establish excellent medical reputations within the colony.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Blanton, *Medicine in Virginia in the Eighteenth-Century*, 85-92. For further information on Virginia apothecaries, see Harold B. Gill, *The Apothecary in Colonial Virginia* (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1972).

<sup>228</sup> Blanton, *Medicine in Virginia*, 32-42.

In assessing the financial figures attendant to such medical practices and the fortunes of some well-known physicians who ran them, it is also apparent that there was ample money to be made in the field, particularly if one was willing to take on more than one medical role at a time. Take, for example, the cases of Drs. James McClurg and James Carter. McClurg, the son of a Scottish immigrant who earned an M.D. at the University of Edinburgh, refused to practice medicine and surgery at the same time in Virginia since he considered them to be two entirely separate disciplines requiring two separate forms of classical training. Even though McClurg eventually earned an outstanding reputation as one of the colony's best doctors, it took him a long time to establish himself within Virginia's elite ranks since he initially could not make a large enough income from his strictly physician-related work to live comfortably.<sup>229</sup>

Dr. James Carter, on the other hand, had no such problems in Williamsburg. In 1752, Dr. Carter invested £740 to stock a drug inventory at a hybrid shop and medical office in Williamsburg he called *The Unicorn's Horn*. As Dr. Carter's expense accounts indicate, he did fairly well. In addition to the fees he collected for standard medical exams and doctor's visits, Carter replaced, on a yearly basis, an average of roughly £330 worth of merchandise he sold to customers at marked-up retail prices between 1752 and 1764.<sup>230</sup>

While the profit margins on these goods did not make Dr. Carter extraordinarily wealthy, he had made enough money by 1764 to split the purchase price of a valuable Duke of Gloucester Street lot with his brother, who wished to set up a mercantile shop. The two built a split brick dwelling on the property that could sufficiently house both of

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<sup>229</sup> James B. McCaw, *A Memoir of James McClurg, M. D* (Richmond,: 1854).

<sup>230</sup> Dr. James Carter Invoice Book, 1752-1774, *CW*, Rockefeller Library Special Collections

their businesses. By 1771, Carter had done well enough in his new location that he was able to buy the lot of a failed mercantile firm across the street. It was there where Carter managed to comfortably spend his retirement, leisurely practicing medicine and surgery on a part-time basis until his death over a decade later.<sup>231</sup>

Virginia's merchants and skilled laborers, both of whom provided colonists with a number of tangible goods and services, also saw a rise in their demand and professional status during the eighteenth century. Particularly as new material trends in Virginia appeared in everything from homebuilding, interior design, and furnishings to fine clothing, cookware, and exotic foods, the people who could most readily provide these things to colonists stood to make hefty profits. Consequently, as the personal fortunes of merchants and skilled laborers increased and their central places within Virginia's economy and society were validated time and again by a host of rabid consumers, their overall standing and perception as legitimate professionals improved immensely.

Merchants especially owed a great deal of their success to the rise of the cargo system in the Atlantic World throughout the first seven decades of the eighteenth century. This system, by which European firms in the tobacco market sent more agents, commonly referred to as *factors* into the colony to serve on their behalf as resident commercial facilitators, placed a large number of European merchants on Virginia soil permanently. Concomitantly, because the greater presence of factors enabled overseas firms to claim a greater share of Virginia's trade market and enhance their profits, the capacity of such firms to extend greater credit increased as well. Prior to the credit crises following the French and Indian War, a number of resident factors and native Virginians

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<sup>231</sup> Blanton, *Medicine in Virginia*, 35.



were actively seeking credit from European mercantile firms to stock and operate their own independent stores as general merchants.<sup>232</sup> As a result, Virginia colonists were presented with several ways to buy into the larger, worldly market of consumer-goods and sate their appetites for the finer things in life—appetites that merchants made a great deal of money on.

For many years prior to the implementation of the cargo system, Virginia's economy was largely predicated on the consignment system “whereby planters shipped tobacco to British merchants who sold it on commission” at the highest price they could find someone willing to pay.<sup>233</sup> The purchase of any luxury items outside of the realm of basic essentials, therefore, was typically available to only wealthy planters who could apply the profits earned from their tobacco consignments to the purchase of such goods, most of which were only available in Europe. In other words, low-to-middling colonists during the seventeenth century did not have much convenient access to merchant stores; and in most cases, the only middle-man between the planter and consumer typically lived on the other side of the Atlantic.

Virginia planters, for the most part, liked this system because it perpetuated a profitable chain of events which tended to work in their favor. Not only did planters control the packaging and exportation of their tobacco crops under the consignment system, but they could also make profits, afford luxury items for themselves, and turn into mini-merchants at home. In fact, by running their own plantation stores and selling

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<sup>232</sup> Price, “Economic Function,” in Fleming and Bailyn, eds., *Perspectives, Volume VIII*, 169.

<sup>233</sup> Kenneth Morgan, “The Organization of the Convict Trade to Maryland: Stevenson, Randolph, and Cheston, 1768-1775,” *WMQ*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, Vol. 42, No. 2, (April, 1985), 208.

extra European goods to smaller farmers in exchange for their tobacco, large planters held powerful sway over both the front and back ends of the entire process.

Over time, however, many Virginians complained that they had little to no control for getting the best prices for their tobacco in Europe. Similarly, British merchant firms grew angry with planters for stuffing bad tobacco and a lot of useless tobacco stems into hogsheads that were subsequently overvalued when they went to market. These issues, coupled with the potential for greater commercial and urban development in a predominantly agricultural setting, eventually enticed European mercantile firms to make a change. By the early-to-mid part of the eighteenth century, firms began sending more agents to Virginia to inspect and purchase tobacco before its exportation. They also funded the construction of new colonial retail stores which were to be stocked with popular European consumer goods and staffed by merchant storekeepers. Thus, in the years immediately leading up to the American Revolution, Virginia was almost overrun with merchants and traders who wasted little time in establishing regular business relations, and in some cases, family ties, with some of Virginia's most elite planters.<sup>234</sup>

For some of the more well-to-do and established European merchants—men who were either fully-vested proprietors of large firms or the close relatives of such proprietors—the decision to move to Virginia and establish new operations meant almost instantaneous success, both financially and socially. Archibald McCall, for example, was the wealthy descendant of a Glasgow merchant family that had already done very well in

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<sup>234</sup> According to a 1774 newspaper report out of Williamsburg, in just one general meeting of Virginia merchants that was held in the city in November of that year, between four and five hundred were in attendance. The article was reprinted in New England newspapers. See *Essex Gazette*, Salem, Massachusetts, 6-13 December, 1774 Edition, Volume VII, Issue 333 in *America's Historical Newspapers, Digital Edition*. For a secondary analysis that addresses the ubiquity of merchants in the American colonies during the cargo system era, see Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution, 1763-1776* (New York: Atheneum, 1968).

Europe and in the colony of Pennsylvania. When McCall decided to follow suit by immigrating to Essex County, Virginia in the 1750s, he had enough capital at his disposal to build a comfortable residence and run a profitable merchant store on the Rappahannock River near Tappahannock. And even though McCall was living and working among a fair number of Virginia planters who increasingly proclaimed an adamant hatred for both Scotsmen and merchants, his background and prospects were still deemed suitable enough to allow a marriage between himself and Katherine Flood, a woman of partial FFV-planter lineage.<sup>235</sup>

Because Katherine Flood McCall was an only child, she was positioned to one day be the sole inheritor of a sizeable FFV fortune—one that her father and Virginia professional, Dr. Nicholas Flood, had ironically secured through his own advantageous marriage into the prominent, tobacco-planting Peachy family years before.<sup>236</sup> Alexander Speirs, who was both the leading partner of Speirs, French, & Company and the man informally known as the “mercantile god of Glasgow,” found similar luck in Virginia, albeit in a decidedly quicker, temporary fashion.<sup>237</sup> Speirs came to Virginia briefly during the 1740s, staying only long enough to set up operations, marry a wealthy planter’s daughter, purchase several Virginia tobacco plantations, and then go back to Europe to oversee the whole affair as an absentee owner.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> For some analysis on Virginia planters’ racial opinions of Scotch people and their exacerbated dislike of Scotch merchants operating in the Northern Neck, see Albert H. Tillson, *Accommodating Revolutions : Virginia’s Northern Neck in an Era of Transformations, 1760-1810* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press), 169-70.

<sup>236</sup> Archibald McCall, George McCall, and Joseph S. Ewing, “The Correspondence of Archibald McCall and George McCall, 1777-1783,” *VMHB*, Vol. 73, No. 3, (July, 1965), 312-313.

<sup>237</sup> T. M. Devine, “A Glasgow Tobacco Merchant during the American War for Independence: Alexander Speirs of Elderslie, 1775 to 1781,” *WMQ*, Third Series, Vol. 33, No. 3, (July, 1976), 501-503.

<sup>238</sup> Devine, “A Glasgow Tobacco Merchant,” 501-503.

However, just as these merchants (who were already rich) quickly benefited from their time in Virginia, a significant number of less illustrious merchants, most of whom were initially factors or apprentices for the wealthier owners of big firms, made similar progress over the long haul by laying down roots in the colony and putting their professions to good use. William Allason and Alexander Henderson, for example, both started out in Virginia as permanent resident factors, commonly referred to as “supercargoes,” for two major firms owned by Glasgow merchants, Alexander Walker and John Glassford, respectively. Allason’s and Henderson’s initial objective, therefore, was to work in tandem with these larger mercantile conglomerates overseas and make a profit on their behalf in Virginia, out of which they would receive their requisite, but relatively modest, factor’s commissions.

However, as both men made their way in their new surroundings and saw the potential for financial gains, they ultimately let their contractual obligations to Walker and Glassford expire. Then, in an effort to build independent fortunes, Allason and Henderson simply took on new lines of European credit—most of which were backed by the riches of their former employers—and ran their own successful chains of merchant stores in places like Falmouth and Dumfries.<sup>239</sup> Along the way, Allason even managed to join the likes of McCall, Speirs, and other resident merchants by taking a bride from a “prominent Anglo-Virginian famil[y].”<sup>240</sup>

Even young merchant apprentices like John Hook and David Ross quickly realized that Virginia was a place where an aspiring, proactive merchant with enough

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<sup>239</sup> See D. R. Anderson, ed., “The Letters of William Allason,” in *Richmond College Historical Papers, Volume II, No. 1*. (Richmond: June, 1917) and Charles and Virginia Hamrick, eds., *Virginia Merchants: Alexander Henderson, Factor for John Glassford at his Colchester Store, Fairfax County, Virginia, His Letter Book of 1758-1765*. (Athens, Georgia: Iberian Publishing Company, 1999).

<sup>240</sup> Tillson, *Accommodating Revolutions*, 170-171.

startup capital could thrive. Although both men had little money and virtually no prior professional experience when they first came into the colony, Ross made a small fortune in a relatively short amount of time and actually funded John Hook's merchant store in the western backcountry county of Bedford. This store, like many others that surfaced all across the colony's western borderlands, brought Hook an ample amount of money (at least for a time), with which he gained land, slaves, and planter connections. Hook even managed to marry the daughter of a well-established western planter. Although the partnership between Ross and Hook was dissolved at the start of the Revolution and some residual animosity between the two resulted in a long and messy court drama, their operations, especially in the western region of the colony, highlight the presence merchants were establishing at the time.<sup>241</sup> In short, Virginia's merchants came to represent an indispensable, professional thread within the colony's greater socioeconomic fabric.

A number of skilled artisans in places like Williamsburg also took advantage of Virginia's material culture by catering to colonists' greater demands for new home construction, fine furnishings, and a variety of other goods and services. For instance, in the early portion of the eighteenth century, carpenter James Wray and brick-maker David Minitree co-operated a rather ingeniously formulated clearinghouse for builders on the outskirts of Williamsburg. The purpose of the clearinghouse was to market and provide basic building supplies and services to any residents in the area who sought to embark on new construction. The business enabled the two men to streamline their particular trades in an urban area that had great promise for expansion in the years to come. Moreover,

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<sup>241</sup> Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods*, 28-36, 67, and 91-93.

the business allowed them to establish sound professional reputations among a diverse and growing clientele. Moreover, because Wray and Minitree were able to corner such a significant share of the contracting market in Williamsburg and its nearby counties, they made rather respectable livings in the process.<sup>242</sup>

In the several decades that followed, two of Williamsburg's most active and accomplished builders, Benjamin Powell and Humphrey Harwood, brought even higher levels of professionalization to the field of contracting through their work on both residential and capital improvement projects. Harwood's business, for instance, was particularly diverse due to the range of services he offered. In addition to the vast amount of building work Harwood did for wealthy planters and the large government contracts he was awarded during the Revolution (i.e. the construction of a new barracks and hospital), Harwood and his crew of apprentices and hired hands made their own bricks, constantly tended to the minor repairs of walls and chimneys, and whitewashed homes to keep their customers' houses looking new.<sup>243</sup> Additionally, as the plush Williamsburg residence and eventual planter-like status of Benjamin Powell both suggest, these types of contractors, though not many in number, saw substantial financial rewards for their efforts and were more than legitimate professionals in the eyes of the elite company that they ultimately sought to join.

In the cases of some other Williamsburg specialists who worked in non-building trades, there were also instances where a greater sense of professionalism within their niche fields of expertise greatly improved their personal fortunes and social status. The

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<sup>242</sup> Jameson Harwood, Julie Richter, and Tom Goyens, "James Wray Site: Archeological Excavations at the James Wray Site," *The Colonial Williamsburg Interpreter*, Vol. 23, No. 4, (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 2003).

<sup>243</sup> Humphrey Harwood Account Book, 1776-1794, *CW*, Rockefeller Library Special Collections

professional careers of Anthony Hay, Edward Charlton, Richard Charlton, and William Parks, among others, stand as proof to this point. Just as the successes of the Geddy family proved, all these men had to do to ensure socioeconomic advancement was to provide wealthy planters with something they valued. Hay accomplished this by making fine cabinets and furniture. Edward and Richard Charlton gained similar success by making wigs and providing a number of other gentlemanly grooming services that planters fancied. The latter of the two Charltons even ran his own coffee shop as well. Lastly, Parks, along with several others who followed him, established a name and reputation for himself as a printer. Many elite planters patronized these men since they wanted nicely furnished homes, polished personal appearances, and convenient ways to learn about all the latest business news and political intrigue affecting the colony.

Once again, all of these professionals did well for themselves financially, developed solid relationships with planters, and assumed fairly active roles in local political affairs. Hay, a Scotch immigrant who came into Virginia around 1751, was seldom at a loss for customers seeking his fine cabinetry work and subsequently earned enough money to own a sizeable dwelling and workshop in Williamsburg, as well as the popular Raleigh Tavern, which he purchased in 1767.<sup>244</sup> Parks founded a valuable printing business that produced the most widely subscribed publication in the colony, *The Virginia Gazette*. Consequently, success not only came to him, but also to the future owners of the business, William Hunter, Joseph Royle, John Dixon, and Alexander Purdie.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Tyler, *Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography*, Volume I, 255.

<sup>245</sup> "Virginia Gazette," Official Website of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation <http://research.history.org/DigitalLibrary/BrowseVG.cfm> Accessed 6 February, 2013.

Lastly, as Richard Charlton's estate appraisement indicates, he made a remarkably good living through his wig-making profession and coffee house business. The final estimate on Charlton's estate in 1780 totaled just over £14,419. Granted, due to the mass exodus of southern slaves to British lines during the American Revolution, the £6,500 valuation put on Charlton's seven slaves at the time was decidedly higher than it might have been before the war. However, the overall value of the man's material possessions and business assets were still significant.<sup>246</sup>

While the iron manufacturing profession was not nearly as widely pursued as other, more mainstream occupations, it also experienced a period of higher demand and professionalization in Virginia around the mid-to-late part of the eighteenth century. Consequently, it gave some less distinguished colonists with valuable manufacturing expertise a chance to improve their overall fortunes as enterprising entrepreneurs. Prior to this period, iron manufacturing in Virginia was generally closed off to anyone other than wealthy planters. After all, elite planters were the only ones in the colony who possessed enough slave labor and large tracts of ore-rich land to get started in the business.

However, since it was necessary to perfect a number of laborious steps and scientific processes when producing even the smallest amounts of finished products, the iron business could be rather costly to anyone trying to run small, independent foundries. Therefore, iron production among Virginia's planters was initially just one of many things that they dabbled in for the purposes of economic diversification and potentially creating extra income. Granted, some well-propertied men like Alexander Spotswood

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<sup>246</sup> Estate Appraisement of Richard Charlton, York County, Virginia, 17 January, 1780, CW Rockefeller Library Special Collections



and several members of the Tayloe family got more heavily and profitably involved with ironworks than other planters in the early eighteenth century. Yet, for the most part, even the biggest planter-run ironworks and forges were relatively small in scale when compared to the ones functioning in the middle and northern colonies around the same time. Most Virginia planters, if anything, simply chose to purchase stock in bigger iron operations.<sup>247</sup>

However, by the 1770s, the size and scale of Virginia ironworks started to increase and nearly all of the major iron manufacturers living and working in Virginia were upper-middling, non-natives who were trying to make their big fortunes in Virginia's untapped wilderness. Isaac Zane, Jr. and Dirck Pennypacker, for example, were two Philadelphians who respectively established the Marlboro Ironworks and Ridwell Furnace in the Shenandoah Valley during the 1760s and 1770s. Even English immigrants like Stephen Onion and Thomas Russell, both of whom had previously been assigned by British investors to oversee their interests in the predominantly planter-run Principio Ironworks, quit their jobs as Virginia agents and "struck out on their own as Chesapeake ironmasters."<sup>248</sup>

Even men who had little to no experience with iron manufacturing suddenly entered into the expanding market, confident that they could learn as they went. John Semple, for example, was a Scottish immigrant of middling mercantile ancestry who repeatedly botched a number of independent iron manufacturing enterprises in Virginia

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<sup>247</sup> For information on Spotswood's iron manufacturing enterprises, see Lester J. Cappon, ed. & intro, *Iron Works at Tuball: Terms and Conditions of their Lease as stated by Alexander Spotswood on the twentieth day of July, 1739*. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1945) For similar info on the Tayloe Family, see Laura Croghan Kamoie, *Irons in the Fire : The Business History of the Tayloe Family and Virginia's Gentry, 1700-1860* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007).

<sup>248</sup> John Bezis Selfa, "Planter Industrialists and Iron Oligarchs: A Comparative Prosopography of Early Anglo-American Ironmasters," *Business and Economic History*, Vol. 22, no. 1, (Fall, 1993), 67.

and Maryland, thus angering many of the FFV planters he had recruited as investors. However, as long as newer schemes on the horizon promised to make up for his lack of ironmaster credentials and sloppy business practices, he was still able to convince people to invest and keep himself in business, even if he was far from solvent.<sup>249</sup> Although Virginia certainly lagged in its industrial and manufacturing development vis-à-vis the middle and northern colonies, it still had a lot of virgin territory suitable for undertaking such enterprises—a fact that not only contributed to the immediate development of more Virginia ironworks, forges, and foundries, but also a growing sense of professionalism amongst those who owned and operated them.

David Ross comes to mind as one particular Virginian who thrived remarkably during this period of professionalization and took advantage of all that it subsequently had to offer. By the end of the eighteenth century, he was operating several ironworks across the colony and had become so proficient in the trade that he had taken on the official title of *Ironmaster*. Ross, however, was already a wealthy professional before he fully immersed himself in iron manufacturing. It is thus well worth noting that others of respectable, yet non-elite means, also came into Virginia, developed and grew their own iron operations, and similarly climbed towards financial success, professional recognition, and an elevated social status.

One person who grew to epitomize this development and demand surrounding Virginia's iron industry better than most was Isaac Zane, Jr. Referred to by the famous Carter family tutor, Philip Vickers Fithian, as “a man of first rank” in the Shenandoah Valley and “a Quaker for the times,” Zane was indeed a figure of notoriety within

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<sup>249</sup> David Curtis Skaggs, “John Semple and the Development of the Potomac Valley, 1750-1773,” *VMHB*, Vol. 92, No. 3, (July, 1984), 282-308.

Virginia society.<sup>250</sup> Not only was the Marlboro Ironworks one of Virginia's most profitable business enterprises of its time—a fact that enabled Zane to purchase land, slaves, expand his operations, and even build a large plantation—but its mobilization for the production of American war materiel during the Revolution also made its owner a patriotic hero.<sup>251</sup> Zane even became a regular correspondent of Thomas Jefferson, who repeatedly claimed much admiration for Zane's personal traits and his common interest in making mechanical devices more efficient. One letter from Jefferson to Zane even included a rough sketch of a water wheel that Jefferson encouraged Zane to design for the purpose of providing fresh water to his main house.<sup>252</sup>

However, Zane's great favor amongst his fellow Virginians did not happen overnight. In fact, the numerous titles Zane assumed throughout his lifetime indicate that both the public's perception of him and the internal reflections he made on his own identity progressively changed over time, in accordance with the level of his professional success. When Zane first came into the colony, he often signed his name and/or was referred to in official documents simply as Isaac Zane. However, as the years passed, he attained more financial success and became more politically active. During this period, Zane noticeably took on the titles of *Ironmaster*, then *Gentleman*, and ultimately *Esquire*, the latter of which was usually applied only to the most elite men of Virginia society.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> Robert Greenhalgh Albion and Leonidas Dodson, eds., *Philip Vickers Fithian: Journal, 1775-1776*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1934), 14-15.

<sup>251</sup> Roger W. Moss, Jr., "Isaac Zane, Jr., a 'Quaker for the Times'," *VMHB*, Vol. 77, No. 3, (July, 1969), 291-306.

<sup>252</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Isaac Zane, Philadelphia, 8 November, 1783. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson (TJ Papers)*, Digital Edition

<sup>253</sup> Virginia Miscellany Papers, 1657-1931, *LVA*. Aside from Zane's earlier bonds in this collection, the ones that designate him as "Ironmaster" and "Gent," respectively are Isaac Zane and William Allason, Bond Agreement, 4 January 1776 and Isaac Zane and John Peyton, Bond Agreement, 8 October, 1794. The Esquire reference was attached to Zane's name in a public advertisement for the sale of Marlboro Ironworks which is located in the same collection.

As subtle as these title nuances may have been, such things meant a great deal to the working-class men of the period because they reflected a departure from labor to leisure and essentially signified great personal success.<sup>254</sup>

By the time of Zane's death in 1795, it is true that he was not nearly as wealthy as he had once been. Despite his fine home, plantation, and foundry holdings, his overextended credit, heavy investments in land, and slowed operations at Marlboro Ironworks had put him in a position where he was land poor, in need of liquid capital, and desperately trying to sell his business.<sup>255</sup> Yet, by the same token, the great success that Zane enjoyed earlier epitomized how professionals were able to improve their status by taking advantage of an open society that was seemingly closed off to anyone that was not a planter.

Aside from the modest assortment of his professional contemporaries in Virginia and the planters who had come before them, not many could boast all that Isaac Zane had accumulated materially, accomplished for himself socially, and provided for his country in just a little over three decades. However, such feats were not miraculous. All Zane had to do to make it happen was take advantage of the opportunities that Virginia's environment afforded, employ a profitable skill-set, and build solid relationships with those he worked with. It did not necessarily matter where he or others like him came from or what their backgrounds were as long as they were white and could offer something of value to planter-elites and greater Virginia society. This fact never really changed throughout Virginia's early history. The transformation of middling

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<sup>254</sup> Robert Martello, *Midnight Ride, Industrial Dawn: Paul Revere and the Growth of American Enterprise* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010) Martello notes that Paul Revere and many other skilled craftsmen of the period made similar changes to their titles to indicate greater socioeconomic status, 100.

<sup>255</sup> Moss, "Isaac Zane, Jr.," 303-306.

adventurers, financially-ruined Cavaliers, and propertyless second sons into dynastic FFV planters represented Virginia's first manifestation of this truth. The eighteenth-century emergence and successes of professionals in the colony represented the second.

## CHAPTER VI

### ADVANCEMENT THROUGH SERVICE: THE EXPERIENCES OF VIRGINIA PROFESSIONALS IN WAR

In 1758, Arthur Campbell and James Craik were both doing their best to oppose the French and Indian forces contesting British sovereignty in colonial North America. The son of low-to-middling Scottish immigrants who had moved from Pennsylvania to Augusta County, Virginia during the early 1730s, young Arthur was only a fourteen-year-old boy of modest education when he joined his local company of Rangers.<sup>256</sup> Craik was a newly-arrived, twenty-eight-year old immigrant from Dumfries, Scotland whose medical study at the University of Edinburgh had earned him military rank and surgeons' posts in both the British Army and provincial Virginia Regiment.<sup>257</sup> Like most other Virginia colonists engaged in battle at this time, Campbell's and Craik's circumstances were often dangerous, and their futures were uncertain. However, as each man's experiences in the French and Indian War and American Revolution would attest in the following decades, war proved a major catalyst in determining the course of their professional lives, their levels of success and notoriety, and their ultimate paths towards socioeconomic advancement in Virginia.

Campbell's professional destiny in particular was forged through a series of daring life and death struggles. Because Campbell was raised in the far reaches of Virginia's largely unsettled and unprotected western frontier, he and his family were all-too-familiar with the precariousness of backcountry living by the beginning of the French

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<sup>256</sup> Hartwell L. Quinn, *Arthur Campbell: Pioneer and Patriot of the "Old Southwest"* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1990), 3-6 and 9-10.

<sup>257</sup> Theodore J. Crackel, ed. note per George Washington to James Craik, 26 April, 1777, Morristown, NJ, *The Papers of George Washington (GW Papers)*, Digital Edition (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008).

and Indian War. In fact, when a party of Wyandotte Indians launched a series of surprise attacks against British colonists in 1758 near the remote Virginia outpost of Fort Young, Campbell's disappearance during the assault led his parents to assume that he had become another casualty of frontier warfare.<sup>258</sup>

Campbell, however, survived the Indian attack; and after he endured a week's worth of torture at the hands of his Wyandotte captors, Campbell was taken to a location outside present-day Detroit, where he and several other white men became official Wyandotte adoptees. In the years that followed, Campbell lived among the Wyandotte people and cultivated a keen understanding of Indian culture and language. As Campbell mastered Indian hunting and fighting methods, he even began to emulate the dress, customs, and physical appearance of his fellow Wyandotte warriors.<sup>259</sup>

Nonetheless, Campbell could not forget the cruelties that his new Wyandotte family had initially inflicted upon him. Nor did he ever cease yearning to be reunited with his white family. Therefore, when Campbell heard in the early fall of 1760 that a sizeable British military force was fast approaching the Great Lakes region, he realized that he had a golden opportunity to escape from the Wyandotte settlement and begin his life anew.<sup>260</sup>

After cleverly managing to dislodge himself from a large hunting party, Campbell endured weeks of frigid temperatures and risked near starvation before eventually reaching the British encampment at Presque Isle. For Major Robert Rogers and his famous troop of Rangers, Campbell's arrival seemed like a timely godsend. Not only did

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<sup>258</sup> Quinn, *Arthur Campbell*, 9-10.

<sup>259</sup> Quinn, *Arthur Campbell*, 11.

<sup>260</sup> Quinn, *Arthur Campbell*, 11.

young Arthur possess an extensive familiarity with the Great Lakes region and its native inhabitants, but he was just as equally willing to serve the British as a military scout and assist them in capturing the French stronghold of Detroit. By December, 1760, when the British had put Campbell's knowledge and skills to use and forced the French to surrender their fort, Campbell had essentially parlayed his previously difficult experiences into a lucrative and useful occupation.<sup>261</sup>

For his service to Robert Rogers alone, Campbell was immediately awarded "a thousand acres of choice land near [present-day] Louisville, Kentucky."<sup>262</sup> Additionally, as Campbell decided to continue serving in a military capacity for years to come, he improved his rank and amassed military accolades at a rapid rate. After the French and Indian War provided Campbell with his initial opportunity to hone his frontier fighting and scouting skills, he "was appointed a captain of the Botetourt County militia" in 1770 and later earned the rank of major in Fincastle County in 1774.<sup>263</sup>

Campbell carried this latter rank into America's War for Independence and continued to gain renown in the western theatre of combat. Particularly since Indian attacks consistently threatened to weaken an already shoddy network of defenses along Virginia's western backcountry, it was not uncommon to see Arthur Campbell providing valuable military intelligence and advice to his superior officers on how they might best shore up and improve their positions. This was especially the case whenever deliberations were being made on how western American forces should make war against various Indian groups and/or seek peace with them.

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<sup>261</sup> Quinn, *Arthur Campbell*, 12.

<sup>262</sup> Lyman Copeland Draper and Ted Franklin Belue, ed., *The Life of Daniel Boone* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1998), 550.

<sup>263</sup> Draper and Belue, *Daniel Boone*, 550.



By October of 1781, when the famous American General Nathaniel Greene petitioned Congress to seek approval for negotiating a treaty with the Cherokee and Chickasaw Indians, one of the recommendations he submitted in support of the petition was a letter that the recently-promoted Colonel Arthur Campbell had written on the subject.<sup>264</sup> In just the space of roughly twenty five years, Campbell had truly become a professional soldier. However, he was a far cry from the green conscript who was taken prisoner by Wyandotte Indians in 1758. Rather, he was one of the most experienced military officers in Virginia, an important figure in defending and settling western territories, and a valuable advisor on Indian affairs for the soon-to-be independent United States of America.

Indeed, by the 1790s, Colonel Arthur Campbell's remarkable evolution from an average farmer's son into a skilled frontier commander and political leader was even more evident than before. Not only did Campbell frequently dispense his political opinions and military advice to powerful national leaders and fellow Virginians like Thomas Jefferson and George Washington, but he did so with a unique air of personal and professional confidence. In 1797, for instance, Campbell had grown fearful that a potential war between America and France over the infamous XYZ Affair might cause Americans to strike a military alliance with England. And since Campbell had fought so vigorously to break the bonds of English tyranny during the Revolution, he informed

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<sup>264</sup> Bud Hannings, *Chronology of the American Revolution: Military and Political Actions Day by Day* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2008), 479.

Jefferson—in a piece of correspondence he asked to be kept private—that an American alliance with Great Britain would come only over his dead body.<sup>265</sup>

Admitting his anger over France’s behavior in the XYZ Affair, Campbell expressed his willingness to fight again for America if war with France came—something which likely did not sit well with Jefferson’s Francophile sensibilities and anti-war stance. However, Campbell crudely stated in the same breath that “a treaty of alliance” with Great Britain in such a war “may only be a prelude to a restoration of monarchy; a hateful monarchy under one of the boobys [sic] of that island.”<sup>266</sup> Campbell’s advice to Jefferson, therefore, was to avoid both troubling scenarios by “arous[ing] and arm[ing] the citizens of America.”<sup>267</sup>

Campbell’s logic in proposing such a strategy was multifaceted. On one hand, he believed that a major mobilization would strengthen America’s military forces and instill Americans with a greater sense of national pride and security. Yet, at the same time, Campbell estimated that such a drastic action would also deter a recently-weakened French regime from escalating hostilities and send a message to Great Britain that the United States stood well-prepared to defend its newly-won independence. Largely due to Campbell’s extensive professional experience as a military officer and Indian diplomat, his plan of action was both deftly conceived and sensitive to all involved parties. And even though Secretary of State Jefferson might not have agreed with everything Campbell said, he nevertheless opened his ears to what the old veteran had to say.

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<sup>265</sup> Arthur Campbell to Thomas Jefferson, 4 July, 1797, Washington County, VA, Barbara B. Oberg and J. Jefferson Looney, eds. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson (TJ Papers)*, Digital Edition (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2009).

<sup>266</sup> Arthur Campbell to Thomas Jefferson, 4 July, 1797, Washington County, VA, *TJ Papers*, Digital Edition.

<sup>267</sup> Arthur Campbell to Thomas Jefferson, 4 July, 1797, Washington County, VA, *TJ Papers*, Digital Edition.

Similarly, when Colonel Campbell feared an imminent Indian attack on Virginia's western frontier a year later in 1798, he did not hesitate to warn former President George Washington and inform him of what was needed to avert a potential crisis. Complaining that he had no veterans under his command, Campbell insisted that the only way he could fathom "new soldiers do[ing] the work of veterans" was if Washington promptly provided his regiment with the most modern guns and artillery available.<sup>268</sup> Washington, who was not only familiar with the value of veteran soldiers, but also interested in professionalizing American military forces, acknowledged Campbell's predicament and expressed his full support.

Perhaps even more noteworthy, however, was the manner in which Washington exhibited his heartfelt appreciation for all that men like Campbell had contributed and what they still had to offer in the way of their professional knowledge. In response to Campbell's letter, Washington wrote:

I thank you, Sir, for the communication of your ideas (under date of the 13<sup>th</sup> of August) respecting the provisions which should be made in our military arrangements "to meet the force & extent of the crisis." I am always pleased to receive the opinions and suggestions of those who have employed their thoughts upon subjects which may be useful to our country, and I am sure that those who know me will do me the justice to believe that I shall give a due consideration and a proper efficacy so far as in my power, to whatever may be calculated to promote our common welfare.<sup>269</sup>

Although part of Washington's response was simply an act of common courtesy, his specific allusion to Campbell's previous advice assigned real value to Campbell's experience and proficiency as a military and political leader. In fact, as Campbell

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<sup>268</sup> Arthur Campbell to George Washington, 13 August, 1798, Washington County, VA, *GW Papers*, Digital Edition.

<sup>269</sup> George Washington to Arthur Campbell, 8 September, 1798, Mount Vernon, VA, *GW Papers*, Digital Edition.

biographer Hartwell Quinn argues that “men like Campbell” were some of the most instrumental in the colony for “raising giants (like Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and Henry) to greatness,” the supporting evidence reflected in such correspondence makes such claims hard to deny.<sup>270</sup>

James Craik’s path towards professional success and social prominence in Virginia was not nearly as dramatic as Arthur Campbell’s. Nor did Craik immediately continue accepting new commissions and military responsibilities in Virginia at the conclusion of the French and Indian War as Campbell did. However, Craik’s usefulness and proficiency as a military surgeon and physician endeared him immensely to his comrades and commanders. And considering that the most notable of this group was George Washington, Craik did himself a great service during his formative Virginia years by gaining respect for his professional skills and cultivating such lasting relationships with some of the colony’s elites.

At nearly the same moment that Arthur Campbell was beginning to endure the hardships of his Indian captivity, two 1758 letters from Craik to Washington testified not only to the friendly esteem in which Dr. Craik was so widely held, but also to his indispensability as a wartime medical practitioner. Writing in late December from Winchester, Craik opened one of these letters by thanking Colonel Washington for his “repeated offers of friendship.”<sup>271</sup> Then, after expressing his wishes to repay Washington for all he had done for him, Craik confessed that the consequence of Washington’s friendly gestures towards him were “so great that [he] shall never be able to repay

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<sup>270</sup> Quinn, *Arthur Campbell*, 125.

<sup>271</sup> Dr. James Craik to George Washington, 29 December, 1758, Winchester, VA, *GW Papers*, Digital Edition

them.”<sup>272</sup> However, as Craik further informed Washington about the destruction of medical supplies in Fort Cumberland and the general lack of medicines Craik currently had for treating a growing number of sick and wounded troops, he did manage to repay his commander with an assurance that was most appreciated.

Through previous correspondence with Washington, Craik had expressed a desire to resign from the army and take up his profession independently.<sup>273</sup> In fact, in the decades after the end of the French and Indian War, Craik did eventually “establish a profitable private medical practice” of his own, first at a plantation in Fort Tobacco, Maryland and later in Alexandria, Virginia, where he lived and operated out of an upscale townhome.<sup>274</sup> However, realizing that his resignation would only make matters worse for both the army and any new physician having to inherit such hardships, Craik expressed a reticent willingness to postpone his resignation if Washington thought it best. It was no coincidence that Craik remained the chief surgeon of the Virginia Regiment for the next four years; he was simply considered the best man for carrying out such a difficult job.

Shortly after the America’s War for Independence broke out, Washington reaffirmed his faith in Craik by asking the doctor to accept an administrative post in the Middle District of the Continental Army’s Hospital Department. More specifically, Washington offered Craik a choice between becoming the Senior Physician and Surgeon or the Director General of Hospitals. Although Washington hinted that the pay, rations,

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<sup>272</sup> Dr. James Craik to George Washington, 29 December, 1758, Winchester, VA, *GW Papers*, Digital Edition. For additional reports on the army’s inability to provide enough food and medicine for its sick and wounded see Dr. James Craik to George Washington, 20 December, 1758, Winchester, VA, *GW Papers*, Digital Edition.

<sup>273</sup> Dr. Craik made mention of his potential resignation in two of the aforementioned letters to George Washington, dated 20 and 29 December, 1758.

<sup>274</sup> Crackel, ed. note per George Washington to James Craik, 26 April, 1777, Morristown, NJ, *GW Papers*, Digital Edition. Also see Deering Davis, Stephen P. Dorsey, and Ralph Cole Hall, *Alexandria Houses: 1750-1830* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1946), 74-75.

and horse privileges for both positions were likely modest in comparison to what Craik was earning through his private medical practice, Washington implored Craik to give the idea his deepest consideration.

Washington confessed in his letter to Craik that only the doctor could ultimately determine how “advisable or practicable” it might be “to quit [his] family and practice at this time.”<sup>275</sup> Yet, His Excellency still desperately desired the services of the “dear doctor” whom he held in “the sincerest regard and esteem.”<sup>276</sup> Considering that Craik was later praised for his Revolutionary War service and went on to become one of Washington’s most trusted friends and his personal family physician, Craik’s eventual acceptance of the Director General’s post was something that had deep and lasting ramifications for his subsequent life and medical practice in Alexandria, Virginia. As one historian noted, “the Craiks were popular socially in the city [of Alexandria] and the doctor’s practice was extensive. He maintained it until old age compelled him to retire to his country estate, ‘Valcleuse.’”<sup>277</sup> Needless to say, Craik was one individual who truly bridged the gap between upper-middling immigrant professionals and the native members of Virginia’s planter *aristocracy*.

Admittedly, the experiences of Campbell and Craik were different on several fronts. Not only did they work in contrasting professional fields, but Craik in particular was better educated in an established profession and more capable of producing an occupational income upon his arrival in Virginia. Furthermore, Craik was better equipped and more inclined to use his professional earnings for acquiring the material

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<sup>275</sup> George Washington to Dr. James Craik, 26 April, 1777, Morristown, NJ, *GW Papers*, Digital Edition

<sup>276</sup> George Washington to Dr. James Craik, 26 April, 1777, Morristown, NJ, *GW Papers*, Digital Edition

<sup>277</sup> Davis, Dorsey, and Hall, *Alexandria Houses*, 74.

comforts of a Virginia planter. Yet, despite such differences, the fundamental successes of both men were parallel in a number of important ways. Both men were, in 1758, middling men with no major fortunes or hereditary ties to Virginia's planter *aristocracy*. Secondly, war in Virginia initiated the professional legitimacy of both men and sustained it over time. Lastly, the socioeconomic fruits that such legitimacy bore also made Campbell and Craik men whose professional advice and friendship was continually coveted by some of Virginia's most elite and powerful citizens.

That Virginia's involvement in conflicts like the French and Indian War, Dunmore's War, and the American War for Independence was so critical in improving the fortunes of various professionals in the colony should not come as a shock. After all, whenever nations go to war or revolutions occur, soldiers are needed to fight; officers are needed to lead; doctors are needed to care for the wounded; merchants are needed to procure basic goods; and manufacturers must produce war materiel. Inevitably, those Virginians who carried out those functions well in the late colonial and Revolutionary periods stood a decent chance at improving their socioeconomic status.

Yet, many historians have taken such things for granted when analyzing the roles that Virginia and its citizens played during the French and Indian War, Dunmore's War, and the American Revolutionary War. Consequently, the numerous ways in which these wars enabled some Virginia professionals to become successful—both within and beyond a strictly military context—often remains overlooked in the dense historiography of colonial and Revolutionary Virginia. More specifically, these issues are either buried deep within broader commentaries on Virginia's wartime society, economy, politics, and military operations or underemphasized by biographers of military leaders.

Given this state of affairs, the purpose of this chapter is to build a synthesis and offer deeper clarity to an important phenomenon that has often taken on more of an assumptive, underlying role in the historiography. Many of the individuals who grew as professionals during Virginia's wars and benefited thereafter have already been the subjects of numerous biographies and scholarly articles. However, the socioeconomic successes of such professionals—namely a number of soldiers and physicians—has yet to be collectively and explicitly connected with the dynamic between war and growing professional legitimacy in Virginia. Just like changing immigration patterns, urban growth, and greater modes of professionalization in eighteenth-century Virginia all worked in their own ways to enable the rise of professionals living and working in the colony, so too did war.

It should be clarified that war in Virginia did not substantively result in professional legitimacy and socioeconomic advancement for all those engaged in non-planting occupations. Many full-time lawyers, for instance, were already well on their way towards gaining financial independence and social esteem in Virginia by the 1750s, well before the start of the French and Indian War. And although numerous historians have astutely noticed the prominent role that Virginia's lawyers assumed in instigating the American Revolution and incorporating republican principles into the new nation's laws thereafter, there was still no immediate, tangible advantage beyond political influence that lawyers gained in their practices because of such actions.<sup>278</sup> If anything, war stifled the efficiency of the colony's court system, pushed numerous lawyers into

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<sup>278</sup> For comprehensive analysis on the connection between Virginia lawyers and the American Revolution, see the following: A.G. Roeber, *Faithful Magistrates and Republican Lawyers: Creators of Virginia's Legal Culture, 1680-1810* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 160-202. Eric Stockdale and Randy J. Holland, *Middle Temple Lawyers and the American Revolution* (Eagan, MN: Thomson West, 2007)



temporary military or political service, and caused many colonists to prioritize their basic subsistence and safety ahead of any lawsuits they might have otherwise concerned themselves with.

While Virginia's merchants continued to practice their professions in wartime far more than the colony's contingent of lawyers, the effect that war had on their livelihoods was also markedly modest—at least in the sense that war did not provide them with any clear, new advantage they did not already possess. In fact, despite what one might initially assume about the prominent, profiteering roles that merchants traditionally assume in wartime environments, it would be misleading to say that Virginia's merchants gained anything more than an enhanced sense of professional appreciation during the wars of the late colonial and Revolutionary periods. On the contrary, many Virginia merchants preferred peacetime business since they often ended up losing money when their operations became heavily tied to Virginia's military mobilization.

Virginia's young and rapidly expanding economy was far from stable to begin with, particularly since it had remained bound to mercurial tobacco prices since the mid seventeenth century. Subsequently, when merchants borrowed capital or sank personal fortunes into wartime manufacturing and supplying schemes—many of which involved tremendous risk—they often ended up losing money through excessively high operation costs, enemy confiscation of goods, and/or broken promises of government reimbursement. Moreover, if and when Virginia's merchants did get paid for official government contracts, the currency they received was often so inflated that it was hardly commensurate with the value of their initial investments. Considering that war also slowed—and in the case of the Revolution, actually closed—the courts in which

merchants sued their debtors, it is clear that merchants were far better served by other, more amenable characteristics of Virginia's society and economy than they were by war.

The wartime experiences of Virginia merchants Charles Dick, James Hunter *The Older*, John Banks, and David Ross exemplify all of the above scenarios. Without any wartime profiteering to their credit beforehand, all four men were able to become wealthy, successful, and well-connected businessmen on their own through their respective mercantile operations. Additionally, their willingness to lend support and professional services to Virginia in its most desperate hours of military need attached a level of respect to their names, even if they were occasionally criticized for seeking personal fortune at the expense of the state.

Dick, who served as one of Virginia's commissary commissioners in the French and Indian War and operated a gun manufactory during the Revolution, was such a notable merchant and contributor to Virginia's war efforts that John Adams later remarked that Dick's son Alexander was "of good family and a handsome fortune in Virginia."<sup>279</sup> James Hunter was similarly held in high esteem by James Mercer and Governor Thomas Jefferson for his professional contributions to the state. In describing the strategic wartime importance of Fredericksburg, Mercer praised Hunter by stating:

There is not in this state a place more deserving of public attention than this town and [its appendage], Mr. Hunter's [Iron Works.] I am sure I need not [tell] you that it is from Mr. Hunter's works that every camp kettle has been supplied for the Continental and all other troops employed in this state and to the southward this year past, that all the anchors for this state and Maryland and some for Continent have been procured from the same works, that without these works we have no other resources for those articles, and that without the assistance of the bar iron made there even the

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<sup>279</sup> John Adams and Lymon Henry Butterfield, ed. *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams, 1771-1781* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1962), 371.

planters hereabouts and to the southward of this place would not be able to make bread to eat.<sup>280</sup>

Jefferson concurred with Mercer's sentiments. In fact, after telling Hunter that "the importance of your works to the operations of war will doubtless point them out as an object of destruction to the desolating enemy now in the country," Jefferson promised to do everything in his power as Virginia's Governor to protect and preserve the investment and sacrifice Hunter had personally poured into the cause.<sup>281</sup>

John Banks nobly attempted to merge his mercantile interests with his patriotic duty as well. After forming a business partnership with James Hunter's younger cousin (also named James), Banks risked a great deal of his own money in an effort to run the British naval blockade and provide American troops in the southern theatre of war with desperately needed supplies.<sup>282</sup> Additionally, David Ross's wartime efforts were numerous and diverse. Not only did Ross's ironworks help to produce cannon, but the mercantile firm of Ross, Shore, & Company sold various goods to the Continental Army, and Ross's eventual appointment as State Commercial Agent essentially put him in charge of managing Virginia's wartime economy.

However, for all the positive professional acclaim these men derived from putting their mercantile skills to work on Virginia's behalf, war still created a drag on their operations in some way. During the French and Indian War, for instance, Charles Dick brokered a rather lucrative beef supply contract with Virginia officials only to have it

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<sup>280</sup> James Mercer to Thomas Jefferson, 14 April, 1781, Fredericksburg, VA, *TJ Papers*, Digital Edition

<sup>281</sup> Thomas Jefferson to James Hunter, 10 January, 1781, Richmond, VA, *TJ Papers*, Digital Edition. For an additional secondary references on the importance of Hunter's ironworks during the Revolution and the lengths that Virginia troops went to in order to protect them, see John E. Selby, *The Revolution in Virginia, 1775-1783* (Williamsburg: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1988), 224 and 270.

<sup>282</sup> R. Walter Coakley, "The Two James Hunters of Fredericksburg: Patriots among the Virginia Scotch Merchants," *VMHB*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (Jan., 1948), 18.

repudiated shortly thereafter. Governor Dinwiddie, who was largely to blame for terminating the contract, told British General Edward Braddock that the price of beef granted to Dick in the initial negotiations was so outrageous that it seemed as if the young merchant was engaged in “a job to cheat the public.”<sup>283</sup> The meat contract dispute angered Dick greatly; and after he endured several other instances in which the Virginia government would not cooperate or reimburse him for his commissary services as promised, he complained to Colonel George Washington in 1755. Dick told Washington that “I have sunk my money in the service (though we were assured of being constantly supplied) in confidence of the public faith that I should not suffer, instead of which I am denied my money, provisions, wagons,” etc.<sup>284</sup>

During the American Revolution, Dick faced similar financial difficulties which caused him problems in paying the laborers he contracted to work in his gun factory. In January of 1781, Dick told Governor Thomas Jefferson that he could not be expected to keep his business running for long “without money and provisions.”<sup>285</sup> And even though Dick was eventually successful in securing a warrant from Virginia officials for £100,000 worth of operating capital, he still complained that such an amount was really insufficient over the long term. According to Dick, the high volume productivity that the government requested required more workers; and in a market where worker’s wages were at a

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<sup>283</sup> Crackel, ed. biographical note on Charles Dick in *GW Papers*, Digital Edition. Crackel’s specific reference to Dinwiddie’s criticism of Dick comes from the following letter: Governor Robert Dinwiddie to General Edward Braddock, 23 May, 1755, *Dinwiddie Papers*, *VHS*.

<sup>284</sup> Charles Dick to George Washington, 6 September, 1755, Fredericksburg, VA, *GW Papers*, Digital Edition.

<sup>285</sup> Charles Dick to Thomas Jefferson, 4 January, 1781, Fredericksburg, VA, *TJ Papers*, Digital Edition.

premium, ranging “from 15 pounds to 35 pounds per day,” seemingly large sums of money did not last very long.<sup>286</sup>

James Hunter also grumbled to Thomas Jefferson about labor-shortage problems at his ironworks, particularly since many of his workers (who had previously been granted draft exemptions for labor purposes) were increasingly being conscripted into military service. Hunter’s situation was made worse when he was forced to abandon operations in the interest of safety. Facing the imminent threat of a British attack in the early months of 1781, Hunter had to gradually slow his operations, break down and hide his factory’s tools and equipment as best as he could, and simply prevent the enemy from confiscating American war materiel.<sup>287</sup>

David Ross endured financial setbacks because of the Revolution too. Forever frustrated with inflation and the endless list of requests and demands that Virginia’s government placed before its merchants, the money Ross borrowed from European sources to fund his wartime schemes overextended his personal line of credit. As William Short noted in a letter to Thomas Jefferson in 1785, Ross may have very well remained property-rich by American standards, but war debts made his overall financial outlook a bit more precarious in European circles. Writing from London, Short told Jefferson that “you will be surprised when I tell you that Ross’s credit here is absolutely wrecked [and] his debts [are] selling at a considerable discount and in the hands of

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<sup>286</sup> Charles Dick to Thomas Jefferson, 5 April, 1781, Fredericksburg, VA, *TJ Papers*, Digital Edition.

<sup>287</sup> For details on Hunter’s preparations for a possible enemy attack and the breakdown of his ironworks facilities, see Thomas Jefferson to James Hunter, 10 January, 1781, Richmond, VA and James Hunter to Thomas Jefferson, 25 January, Fredericksburg, VA and 20 February, 1781, Stafford, VA, in *TJ Papers*, Digital Edition.

trustees. This is another paradox. I am told he could not be trusted for a shilling and yet I think he must still be rich.”<sup>288</sup>

John Banks’ wartime losses seemingly trumped all though. To begin with, Banks and his business partner lost a significant amount of their company’s fortune when several of the blockade running vessels they had purchased were captured and destroyed by the Royal Navy in 1781.<sup>289</sup> Then, just when it seemed that things could scarcely get worse for Hunter, Banks & Company, its primary benefactor lost his life in a profiteering episode that reeked of foul play. During the latter stages of the Southern Campaign, John Banks seemingly gained an opportunity for financial redemption when the Continental Army asked him to supply General Nathaniel Greene’s troops with “clothing and other necessities.”<sup>290</sup> Yet, when the final terms of the contract were agreed upon, Greene had allegedly “gone security for one of John Banks’ notes, in return for Banks’ services in supplying the Southern Army.”<sup>291</sup> Consequently, when a rather young Banks died unexpectedly in North Carolina in 1784 and General Greene mysteriously surfaced in the town on the same day of the death, ready to seize Banks’ assets, a major controversy ensued.

Banks’ brother Henry later claimed that Greene forged the security note and then arranged to have John Banks murdered. Since witnesses attested to the probability that John Banks was strangled, Henry Banks boldly stated it was “impossible to remove the suspicion” that his brother had “either died by Greene’s own hand, by the hand of his

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<sup>288</sup> William Short to Thomas Jefferson, 7 August, 1785, London, England, *TJ Papers*, Digital Edition.

<sup>289</sup> Coakley, “The Two James Hunters,” 18.

<sup>290</sup> Henry Banks, *The Vindication of John Banks, of Virginia, Against Foul Calumnies Published by Judge Johnson, of Charleston, South Carolina, and Doctor Charles Caldwell, of Lexington, Kentucky* (Frankfurt, Kentucky: Published by the Author, 1826), 15.

<sup>291</sup> Coakley, “The Two James Hunters,” 18.

servant, or by some foul means for his [Greene's] benefit.”<sup>292</sup> Likely due to his rank, military heroism, and prestige, Greene was eventually cleared of any charges, and he retained his supposed share of Banks' significant estate.<sup>293</sup> John Banks, however, remained a unique, but symbolic casualty of the merchant's overwhelmingly neutral lot in Revolutionary Virginia—mercilessly trapped in the crosshairs of war and trade, often scratching and clawing to simply break even.

Although lawyers and merchants did not noticeably improve their already sound positions in society as a result of colonial Virginia's military conflicts, the professionals who did significantly benefit from such circumstances were men like Campbell and Craik, who distinguished themselves as soldiers and physicians. The most numerous instances of advancement came in the ranks of professional soldiers. Granted, because military service in the French and Indian War and/or American Revolutionary War required only temporary commitments from colonists and offered meager pay in return, the overall number of on-the-make, career soldiers in Virginia was relatively small. Additionally, many of the most desirous commissions and land bounties attached to military service in colonial and Revolutionary Virginia went to officers who were already high-ranking members of the planter class.

However, such practices were neither absolute nor non-negotiable. And the more entangled Virginians became in wars with France, England, and various Indian groups during the second half of the eighteenth century, a number of Virginians with modest backgrounds were able to break such trends and advance themselves as military professionals, even if their careers only lasted between one to two decades. Part of this

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<sup>292</sup> Banks, *The Vindication*, 34.

<sup>293</sup> Coakley, “The Two James Hunters,” 18.

development was simply attributable to timing. After seven years of fighting during the French and Indian War, only ten years elapsed between the end of that conflict and the beginning of Dunmore's War and the soon-to-follow War for American Independence. Thus, for a few notable officers and Indian-fighting frontiersmen—some of whom managed to serve with distinction in all three conflicts—the greater part of two decades was spent soldiering.

Also, as rampant insubordination and desertion among lower-class conscripts threatened the stability of Virginia forces in the first couple years of the French and Indian War, government officials were forced to make some strategic changes that worked in the favor of non-elites. Colonial Virginia's leaders decided to diversify the officer corps of the Virginia Regiment with some less-illustrious men, abandon the army's mandatory conscription policies, and materially incentivize enlistment.<sup>294</sup> Consequently, for those lesser and middling few who were fortunate enough to take advantage of such changes and rise through the Virginia Regiment's ranks, military service proved invaluable. At the very least, Virginians of military distinction could socially distance themselves from the colony's large contingent of common farmers and tradesmen. Furthermore, as valuable firsthand training, land bounties, income, and/or political influence often accompanied the professional advancement of such men, some were able to claim an improved place within Virginia's plantation society upon retirement from military service.

As James Titus has noted, the decision during the French and Indian War to extend better-paying promotions to non-commissioned officers in the Virginia Regiment

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<sup>294</sup> James Titus, *The Old Dominion at War: Society, Politics, and Warfare in Late Colonial Virginia* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 138-140.



brought about much needed change on two fronts. First, by delegating more authority to men who were not planter-elites, regular foot-soldiers were less likely to resent their superior officers and more likely to honor their full terms of service. Secondly, for those non-commissioned officers who received promotions; men who might have otherwise remained lowly, disgruntled conscripts were rewarded with new commissions and military esteem, as well as higher pay and more substantial land bounties.

The cases of John Sallard and Reuben Vass prove how this worked even on the lowest end of Virginia's socioeconomic spectrum. In the original muster rolls of the Virginia Regiment, Sallard and Vass were both listed as native, non-commissioned Virginians who occupationally identified themselves as joiners. Sallard, who hailed from Richmond County, was apparently a sergeant in George Washington's Company and Vass, who came from Essex County, initially held the same rank in William Peachy's Company.<sup>295</sup>

However, a reference concerning the military careers of Sallard and Vass suggests that while neither man became rich or prominent through his career in the military, each nevertheless improved upon his prior status through promotions previously deemed incompatible with the concept of a *gentleman-only* officer corps. Titus notes that "by the late summer of 1757, each of the six non-commissioned officers assigned to Washington's Company possessed almost two years of continuous military service. Among them were men like Sergeants John Sallard and Reuben Vass, both of whom

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<sup>295</sup> Muster Rolls for the Companies of the Virginia Regiment, Summer, 1756., *GW Papers*, Digital Edition. The entries for Sallard and Vass are as follows: "John Sallard, enlisted September 1755 in Richmond County, aged 25, 5'10", a joiner from Virginia. Ruben Vass, enl. 16 Sept., 1755 in Essex County, 24, 5'9½, joiner, Virginian."

served with distinction for the duration of the war and whose soldierly qualities eventually won them provincial commissions.”<sup>296</sup>

Benjamin Logan and Daniel Morgan similarly benefited from such changes within Virginia’s military ranks, albeit on an exponentially greater scale. During the 1730s, Logan’s family joined a group of fellow Scotch-Irish immigrants that Benjamin Borden recruited to settle in western Virginia. Logan’s parents bore no distinction in either their home country or new Orange County home, and their children were born into fairly poor circumstances. Though Benjamin Logan eventually learned to read and write, he had no formal education.<sup>297</sup> Daniel Morgan was also a man of unheralded ancestry. Believed to have been born in 1736 in either Pennsylvania or New Jersey, Morgan left his home and family at a young age. Subsequently, the disgruntled teenager ventured through Pennsylvania and ended up settling in a part of modern-day West Virginia that was then referred to as Berkeley County, Virginia. Because Morgan was essentially a wanderer without connections or wealthy friends to recommend him, his livelihood initially depended on working whatever manual labor jobs he could find. Among a number of other labors to his credit, Morgan farmed, cleared land, and drove supply wagons for a modest living.<sup>298</sup>

Yet, just as Arthur Campbell proved himself in battle during the French and Indian War and subsequently gained promotion and greater social standing, so too did Benjamin Logan and Daniel Morgan. As historian Charles Talbert writes, “in 1764,

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<sup>296</sup> Titus, *The Old Dominion at War*, 139.

<sup>297</sup> Charles Gano Talbert, *Benjamin Logan: Kentucky Frontiersman* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1962), 1-5.

<sup>298</sup> North Callahan, *Daniel Morgan: Ranger of the Revolution* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1961), 17-20.

[Logan] participated in Colonel Henry Bouquet's Indian Campaign as a sergeant."<sup>299</sup>

However, by the time Lord Dunmore's War began in 1774, Logan, "who may have acquired additional experience in minor frontier engagements in the intervening ten years," was considered worthy enough to warrant a lieutenant's commission in Captain William Cocke's Militia Company.<sup>300</sup> Logan continued on this path of ascension through his service in the American Revolution. Due to his reputation as a fierce Indian fighter in the western theatre of combat, Logan earned greater rank and regional political appeal in the years to follow as well as additional land and income for his efforts. Talbert, in fact, argues that "between 1783 and 1788, Logan was looked upon as the leading military man in the District of Kentucky,"—a place that actually remained a part of Virginia until 1792.<sup>301</sup> None of Logan's success, however, would have been possible without the opportunities that war in late colonial and Revolutionary Virginia provided for professional soldiers.

Morgan's well-documented fame as one of the leading generals of the American Revolutionary War represents an even greater departure from humble beginnings than Logan's story. Without even holding the rank of a non-commissioned officer, Morgan began his military career in the French and Indian War as a provincial teamster attached to the British Army. While serving in this capacity, Morgan endured much hardship and was even badly beaten by a British officer on one particular occasion for

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<sup>299</sup> Talbert, *Benjamin Logan*, 5.

<sup>300</sup> Talbert, *Benjamin Logan*, 8.

<sup>301</sup> Talbert, *Benjamin Logan*, 301.

insubordination.<sup>302</sup> Needless to say, Morgan did very little during these first few years of war to gain military distinction.

However, during a 1757 battle near the western Virginia outpost known Edward's Fort, Morgan was famously "said to have killed four Indians in four minutes."<sup>303</sup> Particularly as Morgan was also said to have famously taunted his retreating foes with an unmatched tenacity and fighting spirit, his conduct drew the attention of both his comrades and superiors and earned a low-grade ensign's commission.<sup>304</sup> From that point forward, Morgan's military career did nothing but blossom. After Morgan prolonged his French and Indian War service by assisting Virginia forces in numerous Indian campaigns, he became a Revolutionary War hero of legendary renown. Lauded as a skilled marksman and guerilla commander, Morgan and his band of riflemen were notably decorated for their daring exploits at pivotal conflicts like the Battle of Saratoga and the Battle of the Cowpens. And as stories of Morgan's heroism and rugged demeanor were thereafter immortalized in everything from paintings to history books, he became one of the earliest and most preeminent figures for sparking Americans' romantic fascination with frontiersmen like Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett.

While Morgan enhanced his professional credentials during Virginia's wars, his prospects for becoming a wealthy landowner and Virginia planter also improved in lockstep. Biographer North Callahan notes that by 1796, Morgan had not only moved from his Saratoga Plantation home near Winchester into a smaller planter's retreat called Soldier's Rest, but he had also grown accustomed to the comfortable benefit of "own[ing]

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<sup>302</sup> Callahan, *Daniel Morgan*, 24. For an additional biography of Daniel Morgan, see Don Higginbotham, *Daniel Morgan: Revolutionary Rifleman* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961).

<sup>303</sup> Callahan, *Daniel Morgan*, 26 and 27.

<sup>304</sup> James Graham, *The Life of General Daniel Morgan: Of the Virginia Line of the Army of the United States, with Portions of his Correspondence* (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1856), 30-32.

through purchase and government grants, 250,000 acres, mostly west of the Alleghenies.”<sup>305</sup> Considering that a man who had been poor and unconnected only decades before his military service could later claim such immense holdings and planter comforts, there no denying that Daniel Morgan’s military career served him exceedingly well.

While it is true that many other high-ranking officers from Virginia gained valuable military experience, promotion, and rewards due to service in the French and Indian War and/or the War for American Independence, the majority of their experiences were unlike Logan’s and Morgan’s. For such men, commissions in both conflicts were—at least initially—more attributable to their preexisting rank within the planter class than any proven ability to fight and command well. Additionally, the roles that most Virginia planters assumed as soldiers were seldom defining in an occupational sense. War may have enabled them to garner heroic acclaim and gain some additional land, but it was not their only path towards attaining socioeconomic prominence. Logan’s and Morgan’s climbs to notoriety, however, were those of men whose success, identity, and occupational status—regardless of any future planting pursuits—were unilaterally tied to their careers as true military professionals.

For men like Adam Stephen and Thomas Posey, who more noticeably fit the profile of well-educated, middling Virginians-on-the-make, war in Virginia made it possible for them to improve their status and fortunes through military careers that would have otherwise been unavailable to them. The immigrant son of a Scottish shopkeeper and cattle herdsman, Stephen’s upbringing in his homeland was hardly one of immense

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<sup>305</sup> Callahan, *Daniel Morgan*, 287.

privilege.<sup>306</sup> Likewise, because of a mystery surrounding his paternity, Thomas Posey was placed into the foster care of his alleged father John Posey, whose proxy parenting and considerable indebtedness left his young son with virtually no legitimate family ties and nothing to inherit.<sup>307</sup> Thus, while Stephen and Posey possessed enough education and minor connections by adulthood to be considered middle-tier members of Virginia's society, their prospects were nowhere near as promising as those of the native planting giants who loomed above them socially.

Stephen, whose outstanding intellectual potential had luckily earned him a chance to study surgery at the University of Edinburgh before his immigration, first came to Falmouth, Virginia in 1748, where he "made a fair living as a physician-surgeon during the next five years."<sup>308</sup> Then, through the subsequent favors of his brother Alexander, who was a fur trader and one of many "rent collector[s] for the Fairfax family," Stephen was able to purchase a relatively small, two thousand acre share of Lord Fairfax's proprietary grant and establish a small plantation, where he engaged in subsistence farming.<sup>309</sup> Posey, who was roughly a generation younger than Stephen, initially realized modest occupational fulfillment in Virginia as well. After the financial ruin of Posey's father forced the young man to migrate westward in search of work sometime before 1770, Posey ended up "settling at Staunton in Augusta County. There he learned the saddler trade, eventually establishing his own shop."<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> Harry M. Ward, *Major General Adam Stephen and the Cause of American Liberty* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989), 2.

<sup>307</sup> Harry M. Ward, *For Virginia and for Independence: Twenty Eight Revolutionary Soldiers from the Old Dominion* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2011), 74.

<sup>308</sup> Ward, *Major General Adam Stephen*, 4.

<sup>309</sup> Ward, *Major General Adam Stephen*, 4-5.

<sup>310</sup> Ward, *For Virginia and for Independence*, 74.

However, as Stephen and Posey went on to assume prominent military roles in the wars to come, things changed for the better. Stephen, who once again benefited from the good graces of the Fairfax family, was recommended for and awarded a captain's commission at the beginning of the French and Indian War—a major coup for a non-FFV newcomer seeking to gain land through military service. Serving admirably alongside commanders like George Washington, John Forbes, and Henry Bouquet on the Braddock, Forbes, and Pontiac campaigns, respectively, Stephen gained distinction as a capable officer who was more than worthy of the colonelcy he held at the war's conclusion.

By the time that America plunged into the War for Independence, Stephen was one of the few Virginian officers that General Washington sought to promote on the basis of previous experience alone. At Washington's behest, Congress unanimously promoted Colonel Stephen to the rank of Brigadier General on September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1776; and by 1777, he had risen to the rank of Major General. Had Stephen not been so fond of drinking, he might have even been capable of gaining even more military prestige in the following years. Alas, a drunken misstep on Stephen's part in the heat of battle resulted in an episode of friendly fire at the Battle of Germantown—something that greatly infuriated General Washington.<sup>311</sup>

Stephen was eventually court-martialed for his conduct at the Battle of Germantown and dismissed from the Continental Army for conduct unbecoming of an officer. Yet, despite this setback, Stephen's prior standing as one of Washington's highest ranking field generals proved strong enough to allow him to retain his honor, property, and influence, even if he was forced to cut his professional military career

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<sup>311</sup> Hannings, *Chronology*, 128 and 223.

short. When Stephen returned home a ruined officer, he was still popular enough with his neighbors to gain election to Virginia's General Assembly.<sup>312</sup> Additionally, much like Daniel Morgan had done, Stephen also grew significantly more land-rich than he had been before his military service. Thus, in the years following the American Revolution, Stephen became a substantial planter and put considerable effort and personal resources towards developing the present-day town of Martinsburg, West Virginia into an urban center, replete with residential dwellings and modern conveniences.

Only a boy during the French and Indian War, Posey had to wait until Dunmore's War and the American Revolution to gain professional acclaim as a soldier. Yet, the benefits he gained from military service were no less illustrious than Stephen's. After serving admirably as a commissary officer in Dunmore's War, Posey was granted a captain's commission at the start of America's War for Independence. He earned his initial military fame for heroic conduct at the 1777 Battle of Saratoga—an engagement in which he served under the command of fellow military success-story, Daniel Morgan. Two years later, Posey was commended for valor at the Battle of Stony Point; and before the war was over, he rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Considering that “the Indian Wars of the Northwest beckoned Posey out of military retirement” between 1793 and 1794 and gave him an opportunity to serve as “a brigadier general [in] the Legion of the United States,” it is clear that his professional military experience was highly coveted.<sup>313</sup>

What was most intriguing about Posey's case, however, was how rapidly he went from making saddles to parlaying his military accomplishments into a diverse and distinguished career in politics. As Harry Ward summarizes in detail, Posey's political

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<sup>312</sup> Ward, *Major General Adam Stephen*, 64-65, 93-96, 179-212, and 213-217.

<sup>313</sup> Ward, *For Virginia and for Independence*, 74-77.



appointments during the early nineteenth century—particularly in underdeveloped portions of the United States—were numerous and important. Not only did Posey become an active state and national politician after moving from Virginia into places like Kentucky and Louisiana, but “when William Henry Harrison resigned as governor of the Indiana Territory to accept command of the Northwest Army, President Madison named Posey as Harrison’s successor for a three-year term.”<sup>314</sup> When men like Adam Stephen and Thomas Posey juxtaposed their modest, earlier peacetime circumstances with the comfortable positions they enjoyed after years of wartime service, it was undoubtedly apparent that virtually everything that led to socioeconomic and political improvement in their lives was directly related to their professional military experience.

While the overall improvement to their previous stations were not nearly as drastic as some of those experienced by some professional soldiers, a few Virginia physicians also benefited from military service in the late colonial and Revolutionary periods. Indeed, a simple issue of supply and demand practically mandated it. The aforementioned Adam Stephen, whose own medical expertise gave him a good idea of how necessary good physicians in wartime were, expressed concern and frustration as early as 1755 with the army’s ability to administer sound care and medical provisions to its troops.<sup>315</sup> Even during the American Revolutionary War, when hospital infrastructure and administration had improved from previous decades, Virginians like Mathew Pope lamented the lack of skilled physicians accompanying the main army and “state[d] that

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<sup>314</sup> Ward, *For Virginia and for Independence*, 77-78.

<sup>315</sup> Adam Stephen to George Washington, 26 December, 1755, Fort Cumberland, MD, *GW Papers*, Digital Edition. In this letter, Stephen stated that “the frequent applications to [him] from the Hospital oblige[d] him to renew his solicitations about a surgeon and medicines.”—the latter of which, according to Stephen, repeatedly went unfulfilled due to the incompetence of forgetful commissary officers.

experienced men of this profession were difficult to find on short warning.”<sup>316</sup>

Consequently, those Virginia doctors who could fulfill the medical needs of the troops were presented with many opportunities to put their professional experience to work and earn the respect of their new employers and comrades.

Dr. William Fleming stands out as a case in point. Much like Adam Stephen, Fleming came from Scotland during the mid eighteenth century, had a modest family ancestry, and could best be characterized as a middling professional upon his arrival in Virginia. Also like Stephen, Fleming was born to parents whose greatest gift to their son came not in the form of money, title, or estate, but a decent, rudimentary education. Once Fleming had such credentials to his credit, he was able to independently seek an even more formal education that aided his quest to become a surgeon and physician.<sup>317</sup>

Before Fleming even came to Virginia, he had already gained much firsthand and secondary knowledge of the medical trade. He apprenticed with an apothecary for a short while and eventually gained entry to the University of Edinburgh’s medical school. Upon graduation, Fleming spent time serving in the Royal Navy as a surgeon. By the time he immigrated to Virginia in the early 1750s, he was well-prepared to make a respectable living.<sup>318</sup> Biographer Edmund Goodwin speculates that Fleming was already making a substantial fortune through a medical practice in or around Norfolk before the French and Indian War broke out, since he later informed Governor Francis Fauquier in

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<sup>316</sup> Oberg and Looney, eds. note per Baron Von Steuben to Thomas Jefferson, 7 March, 1781, Williamsburg, VA, *TJ Papers*, Digital Edition. In this letter, Von Steuben requested that Jefferson find “four surgeons and four mates” for an upcoming military expedition. Oberg and Looney note that Jefferson turned the matter over to Mathew Pope, who in a March 8<sup>th</sup> letter expressed difficulty in locating such men.

<sup>317</sup> Edmund P. Goodwin, *Colonel William Fleming of Botetourt, 1728-1795* (Roanoke, VA: Progress Press, 1976), 1-3.

<sup>318</sup> Goodwin, *Colonel William Fleming*, 4-5.

1763 that he was forced “give up a lucrative business” as a result of his recent military service.<sup>319</sup>

Despite the explicit connection that Fleming made between serving in the military and losing his professional income, the French and Indian War actually enhanced his status and professional prospects over the long term. Because of the Virginia relationships Fleming had already developed during his roughly five years of pre-war practice, he had gained enough of a good reputation to warrant an ensign’s commission in the Virginia Regiment in 1755. And while Fleming’s commission was the lowest available, his inclusion among the ranks of more privileged Virginian officers signaled an important gesture of inclusion. When Colonel George Washington soon wrote to Fleming and instructed him to join Captain Hog’s Company as a surgeon—a position for which Washington promised an extra allowance—the young doctor joined the likes of Dr. James Craik in providing indispensable medical care to British and provincial troops.<sup>320</sup>

None of these developments went unnoticed or unrewarded in the years to come. Due in part to the sterling reputation that Fleming gained as a military surgeon and eventual lieutenant in the Virginia Regiment, he was able to resume a profitable medical practice right after the French and Indian War ended, first in Staunton, Virginia and later in Botetourt County, “where he became one of the leading citizens of western Virginia.”<sup>321</sup> Additionally, when the American Revolutionary War erupted, Fleming was given another opportunity to enhance his already elevated status through wartime

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<sup>319</sup> Goodwin, *Colonel William Fleming*, 6.

<sup>320</sup> George Washington to William Fleming, 28 October, 1755, Winchester, VA, *GW Papers*, Digital Edition.

<sup>321</sup> Crackel, ed. biographical note on William Fleming per George Washington to William Fleming, 28 October, 1755, Winchester, VA, *GW Papers*, Digital Edition.

contributions to Virginia's cause, albeit in a way that was not as directly tied to his medical profession.

After being appointed as a wartime commissioner for the District of Kentucky—a position in which he oversaw the construction of defense fortifications in Kentucky County—Fleming served a two-week interim stint as Virginia's chief executive, just before the recently-elected Governor Thomas Nelson could officially assume his new duties.<sup>322</sup> Prior to 1750, virtually no one in Virginia knew who Dr. William Fleming was. Yet, the unique interplay between his profession and multiple wars had made it possible for him to advance and be entrusted with the powers of the colony's highest office—it was nothing short of remarkable.

Dr. James McClurg also enhanced his professional and personal status through military service. One could even say that the American Revolution singlehandedly saved McClurg's career in medicine. McClurg's father, who had immigrated to Norfolk, Virginia in the first half of the eighteenth century, was also a physician. However, McClurg's stubborn unwillingness to assume the roles of physician, surgeon, and druggist at the same time had made it difficult for him to follow in his father's footsteps and earn the status and type of living he desired. Subsequently, when war broke out between Great Britain and the American colonies, McClurg wasted little time in seeking a medical appointment that could catapult him to greater prominence. In April of 1776, Dr. McClurg submitted the following request to Thomas Jefferson:

If this should find you at Congress, when the business it relates to is undetermined, I hope you will use your influence in favor of your humble servant. It is believed that a physician will be appointed to the Continental troops in this colony; an office that I desire exceedingly, as it would

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<sup>322</sup> Goodwin, *Colonel William Fleming*, 35-44.

gratify at the same time my passion for improvement in the profession I am destined to and my zeal to do my country some service. In this time of general activity, I do not like to be an idle spectator; and I know not any post which would suit me so well.<sup>323</sup>

Although the post that McClurg specifically mentioned was ultimately awarded to Dr. William Rickman—a gentleman who had recently married into the wealthy and politically influential Harrison family—McClurg did ultimately have his general wishes filled.<sup>324</sup> Not only did Dr. McClurg eventually “enter the hospital service” of the Continental Army, but he was later named “surgeon general of Virginia’s troops”—both of which proved instrumental in later qualifying him for a coveted professorship at William and Mary.<sup>325</sup>

Furthermore, as McClurg led a host of his fellow physicians in demanding better pay and treatment for their services in wartime, his outspokenness demonstrated an empowering sense of confidence and professional leverage among Virginia’s physicians, many of whom, like McClurg, simply wanted to be recognized for their contributions and compensated accordingly. In a petition that McClurg addressed to the Governor and Council of Virginia in October of 1779, he argued that the government’s promise to pay its physicians “a genteel and liberal allowance” were not close to being fulfilled, particularly since inflation had depreciated wages so severely.<sup>326</sup>

However, since McClurg anticipated that this was not likely an unfamiliar complaint, he immediately followed up his grievance by invoking the importance and

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<sup>323</sup> James McClurg to Thomas Jefferson, 6 April, 1776, Williamsburg, VA, *TJ Papers*, Digital Edition.

<sup>324</sup> Selby, *The Revolution in Virginia*. Selby notes that Rickman’s appointment over McClurg caused a bit of a controversy because his father-in-law Benjamin Harrison’s influence in the matter seemed like nepotism. (139).

<sup>325</sup> Oberg and Looney, eds. note per James McClurg to Thomas Jefferson, 6 April, 1776, Williamsburg, VA, *TJ Papers*, Digital Edition.

<sup>326</sup> Petition of James McClurg to the Governor and Council of Virginia, 18 October, 1779, *TJ Papers*, Digital Edition.

value that medical professionals assume in a military context. As Surgeon General McClurg went on to state that “for our professional services to the public, we expect a recompense in some measure adequate to the value usually set upon such services,” he was doing more than just demanding additional money.<sup>327</sup> He was also expressing the same enhanced sense of occupational worth and newly-elevated status that a number of his fellow professional colleagues were beginning to gain at the same time. Whether it was through professional soldiery or medical practice, war in Virginia had provided yet another series of favorable opportunities for men of talent and lesser status to improve their prospects. For those who were smart and skilled enough to take advantage of it, the rewards often proved substantive.

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<sup>327</sup> Petition of James McClurg to the Governor and Council of Virginia, 18 October, 1779, *TJ Papers*, Digital Edition.

CHAPTER VII

INEXTRICABLY BOUND: THE CHANGING DYNAMIC OF PLANTER-  
PROFESSIONAL RELATIONS IN LATE COLONIAL VIRGINIA

In 1770, across the Tidewater and Northern Piedmont regions of Virginia, Landon Carter, John Tayloe II, William Byrd III, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson were all doing their very best to perpetuate the elite traditions of the colony's planter class. Granted, their individual personalities and experiences differed, and not one of them carried out his affairs in the exact same way. However, at this particular moment in time, their lives and attitudes were all commonly linked together by the greatest rewards that Virginia's environment could seemingly offer—wealth, *aristocratic* distinction, plantations, mastery of slaves, personal freedom, and political influence over their less-privileged white neighbors. Furthermore, as these men and their esteemed peers all observed a shared sense of *noblesse oblige* among one another, each had the benefit of knowing that he could almost always rely on the patronage and goodwill of an indomitable FFV planter network to overcome any problem. More than a century had passed since the original engineers of planter gentility and tobacco culture first arrived on Virginia's shores, but this younger crop continued to carry the torch forward.

In the case of Landon Carter, the proverbial leaf had definitely not fallen far from the tobacco plant. The son of the famously wealthy Virginia tobacco planter, Robert *King* Carter, Landon Carter was himself the master of numerous plantations by the mid eighteenth century. The most famous of his Tidewater plantations, Sabine Hall, was particularly renowned for its exceptional architectural beauty. As evidenced by Carter's journal, many of his estates were continually admired by the countless number of visitors

he entertained. Quite simply, Carter's life was that of a highly privileged, third-generation FFV planter—one whose greatest responsibilities in life were to efficiently manage his inheritance, oversee his labor force and plantations, and to provide political leadership and modest patronage for his lesser neighbors when appropriate.<sup>328</sup>

Because Carter's lot in life was so far removed from the intense toil of manual labor, his efforts to fulfill such obligations may not seem much like work, particularly since so much of the colony's official workforce was made up of poor whites and black slaves doing hard agricultural labor. However, when Carter was not idly socializing, consuming lavish comforts, or entertaining friends, he did take his *aristocratic* planter's responsibilities seriously and dedicated a significant amount of time to fulfill them. Consequently, as Carter often encountered situations in which he had to simultaneously address most all of his responsibilities in rapid succession, it was not out of the ordinary to find him bearing the haughty standards of his class like it was his primary occupation.

Over the course of just one week in April of 1770, for instance, a series of journal entries illustrate how several such situations materialized and how Carter, in turn, dissected and addressed them through a remarkably cogent stream of consciousness. In nearly the exact same section of Carter's journal where he could be seen inventorying his livestock, recording observations of his cattle's maladies, and analyzing the results of several crop fertilization experiments, his attention to farming unexpectedly ceased and shifted to an entirely different set of labor issues. Likely prompted by his previous farm-related thoughts, Carter was reminded of some important springtime tasks that needed to be completed. Thus, without missing a beat, Carter went on to break down the strengths,

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<sup>328</sup> Landon Carter and Jack P. Greene, ed. *The Diary of Colonel Landon Carter of Sabine Hall, 1752-1778* (Richmond: Virginia Historical Society, 1987), 4-6.



weaknesses, and work-ethics of several different slaves and assess which ones would be best suited for those upcoming tasks. Then, just as Carter's frustrations with certain slaves' laziness launched him into a tangential rant over how "carts and plows only serve to make overseers and people extremely lazy," he abruptly switched his focus again—this time to two of his overseers.<sup>329</sup>

In the case of the first overseer Thomas Lawson, a recent breach of trust gave Carter cause for concern. Although Lawson had worked for Carter for some time, Carter suspected Lawson of stealing cattle and supplies from his Rippon Hall Plantation and either selling them or using them for his own purposes at his own nearby farm. The second overseer, John Dolman, had not done much to endear himself to Carter either. While Carter had, in good faith, honored a two-year trial agreement with Dolman—one that made him an overseer at one of Carter's smaller plantations, Fork Quarter—Carter was nevertheless determined to fire Dolman once the contract expired. Claiming that Dolman suffered from a "want of diligence" and that he was a "lazy rascal" and "deceitful liar," Carter's patience with his hired help had seemingly run out.<sup>330</sup>

Carter's angst with his overseers did not stop there, however. In fact, it extended far beyond his mere disappointment with their performance. Because Carter was a man of significant means who could afford to hold others in his employ, he expected his patronage to lesser white men to be justly returned and validated in the form of hard, honest work and gratitude. Any behavior contrary to that arrangement was considered insulting and a breach of proper social deference. Therefore, as Carter privately stewed over such affronts and sarcastically quipped about the "genteel Mr. Lawson's" proclivity

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<sup>329</sup> Carter, *Diary*, 385-86.

<sup>330</sup> Carter, *Diary*, 385 & 388.

for dishonesty and thievery, he indicated just as much disdain for the social shortcomings of his overseers as he did their ungentlemanly actions.<sup>331</sup>

To the casual observer, Carter's detached attitude and blunt summations on such problems may seem extremely condescending and harsh. Truth be told, they were. As many other entries in Carter's journal attest, he often carried out his affairs in the same way that a noble lord might admonish his subordinates for their ignorance and ineptitude. His facetious remarks were frequent and biting, and he seldom missed an opportunity to negatively reflect on others' inadequacies while dually praising his own practical wisdom. Yet, somehow within the depths of Carter's mind, such judgments, lamentations, and actions were simply the necessary burdens of a Virginia planter's job—one that he was performing in 1770 with just as much effort and vigor as anyone else who was toiling in the fields or carrying out a menial occupation.

John Tayloe II, whom historians have often identified as one of the quintessential pioneers of planter entrepreneurship in the colonial era, was similarly positioned within Virginia's planter class by 1770. Like Landon Carter, Tayloe II was also the son of an FFV planter. John Tayloe I was a man of considerable fortune who had passed much on to his family at his death in 1747. Thereafter, Tayloe II had constructed an immaculate mansion at the family's Richmond County plantation, Mount Airy, and become heavily invested in the gentry's obsession with horse racing by breeding a number of champion equines on his estate. However, unlike Landon Carter, Tayloe II was not as preoccupied with administering his inheritance and managing his labor force in 1770 as much as he was with making sure that his children's inheritance would be even greater and more

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<sup>331</sup> Carter, *Diary*, 385 & 388.

diversified than his own. In fact, as John Tayloe III's birth in 1770 ensured that another male heir would carry on the family name, the child's father immediately began to review his business affairs and think of new ways which he could—in the words of Tayloe biographer Laura Kamoie—profitably manage another “iron in the fire.”<sup>332</sup>

This phrase, which Kamoie used in the title of her study, was appropriate considering the fact that outside of tobacco cultivation, the Tayloe family was vitally involved with developing Virginia's capacity for iron production. Unlike other planters who tended to only own stock in a company that owned and operated an iron furnace or forge, Tayloe II held a truly substantive ownership interest in Virginia's ironworks. Tayloe II alone owned the Neabsco Furnace in Prince William County, and along with fellow planters, William Thornton and John Ballendine, he owned one-third of the Occoquan Ironworks, which not only boasted both furnace and forge, but also required one hundred laborers for its operation.<sup>333</sup> In this sense, Tayloe II was truly reminiscent of the previous generations of Virginia planters. Even though his family owed a great deal of its wealth to tobacco and it remained a profitable crop for him, Tayloe II liked the idea of continually expanding his horizons as long as he, like so many of his late seventeenth and early eighteenth century forebears, could maintain the lion's share of control in such outside business ventures, if not own them outright.

On another end of the planter spectrum in 1770, William Byrd III was a man who had lately found little to no use for planting, except in the sense that his family's substantial plantation holdings in Charles City County and beyond provided some

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<sup>332</sup> Laura Croghan Kamoie, *Irons in the Fire : The Business History of the Tayloe Family and Virginia's Gentry, 1700-1860* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007).

<sup>333</sup> Kamoie, *Irons in the Fire*, 166-67.

financial leverage to counter his own financial recklessness. The third of his namesake in one of the colony's most prominent First Families, Byrd III was basically a planter by default whose elitist ideology and habits epitomized the idle, entitled sons of Virginia's planter *aristocracy*. Byrd III gambled recklessly on horse-races, invested his inheritance foolishly, spent lavishly, and acted as if credit would always be available and debts would be forgiven simply because of his name and social rank. Furthermore, as this latter deficiency put Byrd III into serious debt and eventually contributed to his New Year's Day suicide in 1777, he ultimately indicated that, for a man of his rearing and circumstances, death was a much more viable option than having to experience the life of a penniless, undistinguished debtor.<sup>334</sup>

Yet, on April 20, 1770, when William Byrd III began to write a letter on his son's behalf to British General Frederick Haldimand, it was clear that he still saw himself as an esteemed member of the planter class—one whose considerable clout and name recognition continued to merit preferment and patronage. Much to Byrd III's dismay, his son, Tom, had recently been expelled from the College of William and Mary for a series of vandalism offenses. In keeping with the aristocratic tradition of English society, Byrd III wasted little time in purchasing a military commission for his son. At least with a military title, there was hope that Tom's past actions would not tarnish the family's name too severely. As Byrd III's £400 investment attested, however, such commissions did not

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<sup>334</sup> William Byrd and Marion Tinling, *The Correspondence of the Three William Byrds of Westover, Virginia, 1684-1776* (Charlottesville: Published for the Virginia Historical Society [by] the University Press of Virginia, 1977), 603-14.

come cheap.<sup>335</sup> Furthermore, no amount of money could guarantee that Tom would reform his scandalous conduct.

What Byrd III needed was some form of assurance that his son would be favorably looked after by his highest ranking officer. Therefore, as the notorious master of Westover plantation brought Tom's name to Haldimand's attention and specifically asked the general to "entreat his protection" for the lad, the implicit expectation was that preferential treatment be given to Tom simply because of his family name.<sup>336</sup> Byrd III's financial credit may have been spiraling into dire straits by that time, but he would be damned if a planter of his renown and influence could not still cash a check at the Bank of Patronage.

For George Washington, the story was different since his ascendance into the uppermost echelons of Virginian society had been relatively recent and rapid. Because Washington was neither the oldest of his brothers, nor a child of his father's first wife, his youth had been spent at a more provincial family estate near Fredericksburg called Ferry Farm—the home from which Washington pursued early career opportunities in surveying and soldiering. However, Washington's FFV ties to his deceased father and other planter families like the Fairfaxes and Balls always kept him well-connected within the planter network. As time went on, those ties helped him gain numerous opportunities for socioeconomic and political advancement. Subsequently, 1770 found Washington at a juncture of his life where his former dreams of becoming an officer in the British Army had been firmly supplanted by the fruits of an advantageous marriage and plantation life.

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<sup>335</sup> Byrd III, *Correspondence*, 778n.

<sup>336</sup> Byrd III, *Correspondence*, 778.

In just a little over a decade since he had married the extremely wealthy FFV widow, Martha Dandridge Custis—and subsequently gained her inheritance in the process—Washington had become one of the colony’s richest men, most substantial landowners, and largest slaveholders. The seemingly countless number of bondsmen working on Washington’s Fairfax County plantation and the ongoing expansion of the mansion and gardens at Mount Vernon during this time were tangible testaments to these accomplishments.<sup>337</sup> Even Washington occasionally marveled when he contemplated all he had become master of in such a short time. As he later remarked that “no estate in United America [was] more pleasantly situated” than his beloved Mount Vernon, Washington clearly realized that while many of his fellow Virginians continued to dream of owning more land and slaves and experiencing all the advantages of a genteel lifestyle, he was already living in a planter’s paradise.<sup>338</sup>

Thomas Jefferson, who was only twenty-seven years of age in 1770, had not yet reached a personal level of planter fulfillment commensurate to any of the older, aforementioned planters. Yet, his potential for doing so was extremely promising. After inheriting a respectable family fortune just six years earlier and then being elected to the House of Burgesses in 1768, Jefferson had enhanced his financial and political standing in relatively short order. As Jefferson had also distinguished himself both as the youngest member of Virginia’s General Court and arguably the most gifted student to have attended the College of William and Mary, he had gained more than enough

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<sup>337</sup> Douglas Southall Freeman and Richard Barksdale Harwell, *Washington* (New York: Scribner, 1968).

<sup>338</sup> George Washington to Arthur Young, 12 December, 1793. *The Papers of George Washington (GW Papers)*, Digital Edition, ed. Theodore J. Crackel. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008).

respectability to supplement his inherited wealth and transition more fully into the role of a gentleman planter.<sup>339</sup>

As far as Jefferson was concerned, that transition could not come quickly enough. Although he certainly enjoyed the practical and philosophical challenges of practicing law, as well as the entertainments and conveniences of his extended stays in Williamsburg, he had become equally jaded over his clients' inability to pay for his services.<sup>340</sup> Given the fact that Jefferson did not need his legal income to survive, such frustrations eventually made the prospects of full-time plantation management and a part-time legal practice that much more attractive. As Jefferson left his temporary quarters in Williamsburg in late November of 1770 and moved into a recently completed pavilion at his Monticello estate in Albemarle County, he too began to oversee a dominion that would be defined by the costly construction of a beautiful plantation home and the continual management of his ever-increasing slave labor force.<sup>341</sup>

To anyone familiar with the historiography of colonial Virginia planters, these descriptions of Carter, Tayloe II, Byrd III, Washington, and Jefferson circa 1770 do not likely stand out as extraordinary. After all, long before any of these men became the famed masters of their respective plantations, they were each born into elite planter families or, at the very least, families with extensive planter ties. That circumstance alone was a huge blessing to anyone living in colonial Virginia, since it all but guaranteed

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<sup>339</sup> Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, 1st edition (Boston: Little, Brown, 1948).

<sup>340</sup> By 1773, Jefferson and several of his fellow attorneys had become so annoyed about balances owed on old, delinquent accounts that they took out a printed notice in the *Virginia Gazette* telling potential clients that money for legal services would henceforth be due up front. See "Notice Concerning Legal Fees" in Purdie and Dixon's *Virginia Gazette*, 20 May, 1773. For further specifics on Jefferson's legal fee issues, see Frank L. Dewey, *Thomas Jefferson, Lawyer* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1986).

<sup>341</sup> James A. Bear, Jr. and Lucia C. Stanton, eds., *Jefferson's Memorandum Books: Accounts, with Legal Records and Miscellany, 1767-1826*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997). On 26, November, 1770, Jefferson made the notation "Moved to Monticello." (212).

a young man high social status and opportunities for economic success. For many observers, the genteel attitudes and costly material possessions of these men seem like nothing more than the byproducts of a foregone conclusion—one in which Virginia's golden age of *aristocratic* planter privilege was to be extended for another generation.

While such observations are based on a great deal of truth, they only convey one portion of a bigger story unfolding in colonial Virginia. For as all these planters envisioned themselves as a natural, worthy heirs to Virginia's old tobacco dynasties and played their parts with exceptional grace, they and a growing number of their planter counterparts were dealing with new and potentially compromising developments—ones that were fundamentally different from those encountered by their predecessors. In fact, at the same time that men like Carter, Tayloe II, Byrd III, Washington, and Jefferson were so masterfully carrying out the cultural and occupational roles of their FFV progenitors, a number of their actions, attitudes, and/or personal experiences had already begun to delicately contrast with the exclusivity of their *aristocratic*, planter images. The most noticeable component of these contrasts concerned the growing presence and influence of non-planting professionals throughout the colony—some of whom had gained enough wealth and respect to catapult themselves into the same tier of Virginian society occupied by planters.

Most elite Virginia planters, by the middle of the eighteenth century, had become reliant on the services of professionals for both the improvement and sustainment of their own livelihoods. Consequently, planters had been forced to forfeit some of the independence that, in previous days, was considered an intrinsic benefit of both their hereditary titles and the colony's genteel tobacco culture. Amidst a growing assortment



of professional service needs, planters had become heavily dependent on resident factors for facilitating agricultural business and gaining credit; on domestic shopkeepers for the purchase of basic material goods; on country attorneys for settling legal matters; and on doctors for taking care of their families and large slave populations. This dependency was not nearly as prevalent in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, when more utilitarian tobacco masters virtually monopolized almost all non-planting jobs of importance.

Additionally, many planters had gradually come to terms with the increased presence and growing influence of such professionals throughout the colony. Instead of fighting professionals' involvement in their affairs or attempting to relegate their specialized niches to a separate urban sphere, many planters took a more inclusive approach. They sought out professionals' expertise in fields they were unfamiliar with, incorporated professionals into multiple facets of their plantation operations and diversification efforts, and built extensive—and sometimes lucrative—business ties with professionals along the way. Non-coincidentally, the planters who saw the value and potential profitability of non-planting professions also started to encourage their sons in larger numbers to pursue such specialized career paths and began viewing planting as more of a time-honored tradition than a sole occupational focus.

In conjunction with such actions, many planters ultimately endorsed the potential for non-planting professionals to become upwardly mobile in Virginia's society. Despite their personal efforts to maintain a clear sense of identity and an exclusive solidarity with their own class, Virginia's great planters patronized professionals handsomely and, in many cases, developed the same types of friendly bonds with professionals that they

forged with their fellow planters. While more than a few Virginian planters exhibited displeasure with professionals in certain situations and made hateful comments about different European creditors just before the outbreak of the American Revolution, it was not out of the ordinary to see those same planters dining, drinking, and corresponding with an assortment of non-FFV professionals—including merchants—during their spare time. Subsequently, as some professionals earned enough wealth and respect to improve on their middling status, they were eventually accepted as *de facto* members of the planter class.

When these developments are collectively analyzed, they illustrate a subtle, but critical paradox within the rapidly changing environment of late colonial Virginia. Based solely on the superficial criteria of extravagant lifestyles and polite behavior, the activities and expectations of planters like Carter, Tayloe II, Byrd III, Washington, and Jefferson suggest that in Virginia, all remained business as usual. In fact, as long as the traditional customs and roles of the planter class continued to be carried forward by such men, there was little reason to doubt that FFVs and their closest of kin would maintain their genteel image and retain the highest socioeconomic and political status in the colony. However, the same principles that had long justified those traditional customs—namely the core myth of a hereditarily entitled planter aristocracy—were being internally compromised by a host of mid-to-upper-middling professionals seeking socioeconomic status commensurate to that of Virginia's great planters.

It is in light of this paradox, therefore, that several important historical questions must be entertained—questions not only about the professional experiences and sensibilities of elite Virginia planters, but also about how they internalized the greater

changes that were occurring around them and decided to adapt to them. Why, for instance, did so many planters enable professionals in their own Virginia domain when it was the planters themselves, not independent professionals, who had previously monopolized control over professional tasks? In other words, if the earlier, planter-dominated schematic did not appear flawed, why allow things to change, particularly if one could still clearly reap all of the material fruits the old system provided? Moreover, what ultimately caused elite planters to take the next step in favor of professionals by essentially absorbing some of them into elite social ranks—ranks that had always been reserved only for those belonging to the network of FFV planters?

On a more existential level, it is equally imperative to ask about the psychological dilemma that planters faced in maintaining their identities and keeping up appearances in the face of these very real changes. For example, how could planters continue to honestly consider themselves the most elite, free members of white Virginian society if, in fact, they were becoming increasingly dependent on the services and know-how of less-privileged white men to survive? Moreover, how could planters perpetuate their *aristocratic* legitimacy and tobacco culture when their once-exclusive ranks were increasingly being diluted by *nouveau riche* professionals? Lastly—and perhaps most importantly—how exactly did the likes of FFV planters and their closest kin manage to traverse these potentially threatening hurdles without jeopardizing their overall position of dominance within the Old Dominion?

The answers to all these queries may appear difficult to formulate at first. Indeed, they are entangled in a diverse array of issues. However, if one can come to grips with three underlying points, determining exactly how and why the relationships between

Virginia's planters and professionals evolved the way they did is quite clear. The first of these points relates to a simple matter of practicality. As noted in the previous chapters, Virginians steadily experienced a number of demographic, economic, urban, and occupational changes throughout the eighteenth century, all of which challenged the colony's planter-centric dominance in unique ways. Consequently, as FFV planters witnessed such changes, they astutely recognized that over the long term, controlling every single facet of their society in the same way their ancestors had was an impractical expectation, especially since their numbers were relatively small.

The second point concerns just how important it was for planters to hold on to their elite cultural status at all costs, even if it meant having to concede ground elsewhere. Although much of Virginia's *aristocratic* planter culture was clearly predicated on false hereditary assumptions, genteel posturing, and the ironic successes of its early, middling FFV architects, the fact remained that once that culture was entrenched across multiple generations, it held extraordinary power and influence. By the early-to-mid eighteenth century, for instance, a poor white farmer, African slave, or middling immigrant professional could not expect to contextualize his or her place in Virginia's society without first relating his or herself to the actions and possessions of elite planters. Viewed from this perspective, the collective culture of Virginia's great planters—replete with all its tobacco homage, slaves, kinship, material wealth, and polite behavior—was the glue that held their world together and the most important element in perpetuating planter dominance.<sup>342</sup> Losing it was not an option.

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<sup>342</sup> T. H. Breen, *Tobacco Culture: The Mentality of the Great Tidewater Planters on the Eve of Revolution* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985). For additional information on class as a cultural

The third and final point (which links the first two together) concerns the logic planters used to reconcile the very real potential for losing control over their society with their absolute unwillingness to sacrifice the culturally-based appearance of legitimate, hereditary dominance. Fortunately for planters, they already had several things working to their advantage. Bacon's Rebellion had taught Virginia's first generation of FFVs that the best way to maintain one's dominant position in society was to compromise with those who pose the biggest potential threat. Thus, in the years following Bacon's Rebellion, it was no coincidence that wealthy Virginia planters began to assume more paternalistic, democratic attitudes to their lesser white political constituents and share a sense of racial solidarity with them at the expense of black slaves.<sup>343</sup> Additionally, because FFVs essentially made planting and all its attendant advantages the gold standards for life in the colony by the end of the seventeenth century, the planter ideal remained coveted by white Virginians of all backgrounds.

By the time that professionals came to Virginia in larger numbers during the early eighteenth century, planters simply relied on the time-tested lessons of Bacon's Rebellion to resolve their dilemma. By conceding to work amicably with most professionals and even socialize with them in private, planters maintained their sense of social stability and averted the potential for professionals to develop a unified sense of class in opposition to them. Additionally, as so many professionals eventually committed their occupational profits towards buying their own land, slaves, and plantations, the cultural allure of the

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construct, see Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America : Persons, Houses, Cities*, 1st ed. (New York: Knopf : Distributed by Random House, 1992).

<sup>343</sup> Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2003). Also see Lorena S. Walsh, *Motives of Honor, Pleasure, and Profit : Plantation Management in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1607-1763* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

planter's lifestyle often did the rest of the work on its own. For those planters who were already perched at the top of the social hierarchy, making such concessions to professionals may not have been ideal, but it was hardly the end of their world. They simply had to make a discreet allowance within their ranks for some new, professional blood.

Taking these broader points into consideration, this chapter examines the specific ways in which Virginia planters helped facilitate this greater transformation. Primarily drawing on the diverse array of interactions that Carter, Tayloe II, Byrd III, Washington, and Jefferson had with professionals throughout their lives, it seeks to strip away the cultural veneer of the FFV network and illustrate the down-to-earth way that Virginia planters had to negotiate their status with others in their midst. Special attention is paid to how each of these planters was conditioned to perceive professionals from a young age, which individuals most satisfied their particular professional needs as adults, and how they gradually reached a point when, whether they liked it or not, dependence on professional services became a regular part of their lives as planters.

Lastly, as this chapter accounts for the personal and business relationships these planters developed with their professional counterparts, it explores the sometimes conflicted, but ultimately tolerant, actions planters took with regard to professionals' social mobility. None of Virginia's planters blindly approved of every professional they came into contact with. Yet, for most every professional that they did not care for, they could likely identify several others who they genuinely respected and considered worthy of esteemed status. This vetting process proved to be the final and most critical step in allowing certain professionals to be absorbed into the planter fold.

Once these developments are linked together, the planter-professional paradox that seemed so puzzling at first becomes much clearer. Certainly, the world that Virginia planters created for themselves was laced with a culture of exclusivity. Yet, given that the foundations of that world were based on nothing more than plying a valuable vocation, cultivating credibility and social respect, and forcing others into various modes of dependency—all of which professionals clearly did in the presence of planters—the evolution of the colony’s planter-professional dynamic was just a contingent byproduct of Virginia’s deceptively open society. By the dawn of the American Revolution, many professionals had already made their fortune in the world and proven their worth to planters. Virginia, in turn, was transformed into a place where planters and a newly initiated group of professionals coexisted in relative social and cultural harmony.

For planters like Landon Carter, John Tayloe II, and William Byrd III, who came from Virginia’s wealthiest Tidewater families, their formative perceptions of non-planting professions were derived from their fathers’ forays into peripheral areas of professional interest. After all, decades before such interests fell more heavily under the purview of professionals, Robert *King* Carter, John Tayloe I, William Byrd II, and many other FFV planters had handled such tasks themselves and managed extraordinarily well. Not only were these men rich planters, but their tangential business operations, office-holding responsibilities, and land-grabbing schemes put them into situations where they sporadically—and sometimes simultaneously—played the lucrative and influential roles of domestic merchants, iron manufacturers, surveyors, military officers, and/or politicians.

As Laura Kamoie notes, by the time John Tayloe I died in 1747, he was doing much more than planting and consigning tobacco. On the nearly 30,000 acres he possessed in Virginia and Maryland, he was also “operat[ing] a successful ironworks, a nascent shipbuilding enterprise, three or more water-powered mills, and at least one regularly patronized smith’s shop.”<sup>344</sup> Additionally, Tayloe I was “a well-known merchant’s agent and dealer in slaves” who grew a multitude of crops and “raised hogs and cattle as well.”<sup>345</sup> As several of Robert Carter’s plantations resembled miniature working towns and William Byrd II held substantial interests in everything from selling tobacco and Richmond real estate to trading furs and surveying the Virginia-North Carolina border, they too fit the multifaceted planter profile in their own ways.<sup>346</sup>

As long as Virginia planters continued to multitask in such a manner without getting major competition from full-time professionals, there was no need for them to specialize extensively in any one particular profession outside of the planting realm. In fact, as the study of John McCusker and Russell Menard indicate, because Virginia planters had such incredible control over all these different affairs, they were generally content to just experiment with a few non-planting professions to diversify their operations and avoid the potential for financial ruin if tobacco prices plummeted.<sup>347</sup> Thus, while Landon Carter, John Tayloe II, and William Byrd III watched their fathers carry out multiple occupational tasks under the lone umbrella of planting, they definitely did not see them taking on other professions in a full-time capacity.

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<sup>344</sup> Kamoie, *Irons in the Fire*, 31.

<sup>345</sup> Kamoie, *Irons in the Fire*, 31.

<sup>346</sup> Robert Carter and Louis B. Wright, *Letters of Robert Carter, 1720-1727; the Commercial Interests of a Virginia Gentleman*, Huntington Library Publications (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1940). Byrd II, *Correspondence*, 195-201.

<sup>347</sup> John J. McCusker, Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 126-127.



This is not to say that these earlier planters did not begin to see changes on the horizon or that they discouraged the next generation from gaining as much experience as possible in non-planting fields of expertise. Actually, when Robert Carter sent his son Landon to school in England, it was Robert's hope that his son's studies in mercantilism and economics would encourage the young man to become a Virginia merchant upon his return home. Perhaps after seeing the rapid success of someone like *Scotch Tom* Nelson, Robert Carter realized that as long as Virginia's economy continued to grow, there was just as much money to be made providing a variety of mercantile goods and services domestically as it was for a major European mercantile firm to ship tobacco and consumer goods across the Atlantic.<sup>348</sup> Similarly, when William Byrd III went to England as a teenager to study law and then later upgraded his honorary military title by commanding Virginia forces during the French and Indian War, both pursuits were considered noble and useful for a planter of his lineage.

However, like most of their Tidewater brethren of the same age, Landon Carter did not become a merchant and William Byrd III did not open a law practice or parlay his French and Indian War service into an exclusive or longstanding military career. Just as their fathers had done before, they only experimented with non-planting professions. Consequently, even as such non-planting experiments may have helped planters develop a greater appreciation for what professionals did, very few of them could say that they understood what it was like to be a full-time professional. In fact, Virginia's planter-elites were inherently conditioned to look at full-time professionals as *others* who did not entirely fit into the planters' world.

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<sup>348</sup> Jack P. Greene, *Landon Carter: An Inquiry into the Personal Values and Social Imperatives of the Eighteenth-Century Virginia Gentry* (Charlottesville: Dominion Books, 1967), 2.

This does not mean that this particular group of Tidewater planters was destined to see all professionals as threats and despise them. What it does mean though is that planters were cautious and selective in determining which particular professionals they worked with and befriended. Furthermore, because planters often made a correlation between the professionals that they relied upon with a slight relinquishment of their own power, planters' personal relationships with professionals often reflected an erratic sensibility—one in which feelings of discomfort, anger, and acceptance were all ultimately forced to reconcile.

For example, as Landon Carter pursued planting full-time and began to realize that he could not *completely* control and/or assume multiple occupational roles like his father, Carter initially regarded many professionals as self-serving outsiders who were far from welcome in Virginia. In the case of merchants, Landon Carter's harsh opinions were a byproduct of changes in the Atlantic World's system of trade. During Robert Carter's era, when the simpler consignment system dominated, it was fairly easy for a large planter to make two sets of profits with his tobacco crop by assuming two occupational functions. As a tobacco master, the planter could simply sell his shipment and turn a profit, albeit in the form of credit. Once that credit was used to purchase various goods from European markets, the planter could then become a domestic merchant by exchanging surplus goods in his plantation store for the tobacco or currency of smaller farmers.

However, once the cargo system began to take a stronger hold on the Atlantic economy in the eighteenth century and a new group of mercantile middle-men moved to Virginia to facilitate planters' tobacco consignments, Landon Carter could not operate in

the same way as his father had. Certainly, Landon Carter and many other planters continued to run their own plantation stores; but at the same time, they increasingly found themselves at the mercy of both overseas brokers and resident factors. Not only did many of these men—especially the resident factors—process the tobacco consignments between planters and the mercantile houses of London and Glasgow, but they also competed with planters by directly selling consumer goods, including tobacco products, in Virginia stores. That new source of competition greatly disturbed Carter and negatively colored his overall opinions of merchants.

Angered by one particular instance in March 1770 when a number of brokers allegedly undervalued his tobacco for their own gain, Carter wrote that “by profession, a broker is a villain in the very engagements he enters into.”<sup>349</sup> Moreover, Carter noted that a broker “must buy and sell as cheap and as dear as he can . . . and when a man becomes broker for both merchant and smoker it is the most villainous part of his roguish employment because he must be perpetually counteracting the interest of either one or the other.”<sup>350</sup> In practical terms, Carter’s assessment was correct. As intermediaries, factors did indeed have something to gain from each of the two parties they served. Furthermore, they naturally did their best to realize as much profit as possible from a given set of transactions. Yet, the high-minded rationale of Carter’s rebuke was considerably less accurate. While he claimed that the mercantile profession was tainted by greed and deception, what really infuriated him was that merchants and their brokers were now realizing two sets of profits from Virginia tobacco instead of planters like him doing so.

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<sup>349</sup> Carter, *Diary*, 373.

<sup>350</sup> Carter, *Diary*, 373.

Carter had equally critical things to say about the presence and function of lawyers in Virginia. While sarcastically expressing his annoyance over how certain colleagues of his were prone to exhibit “lawyer-like” tendencies and/or propose private bills in the House of Burgesses that he suspected “they were probably paid for drawing” in the first place, Carter often characterized lawyers as extortionists whose obsession with showing off their legal credentials far outweighed the actual amount of legal knowledge they possessed.<sup>351</sup> For instance, when Carter once got into an argument with attorney and fellow Burgess Robert Jones of Surry County, over Jones’ assertion that Carter did not understand the proper procedure for taking a legal suit to trial, Carter’s subsequent remarks on the legal profession were not kind. Claiming that most of what lawyers gained from law books could “be learned in the Spare hours that some people had behind counters,” Carter dismissed the profession as easy and unoriginal.<sup>352</sup> Taking his remarks another step, Carter stated that “attorneys were always looked upon as so many copyers [sic] and their knowledge only lay in knowing from whom to copy properly.”<sup>353</sup>

Seemingly, the only two professional groups that Carter did not take major exception to in Virginia were professional soldiers and doctors; and even so, he still managed to besmirch various components of those professions and the sorts of men that pursued them full-time. For example, Carter greatly supported and admired the efforts of Virginia’s soldiers and officers during both the French and Indian War and America’s War for Independence, especially with regard to his friends in the planter class who had bravely, but only temporarily, taken time to perform their *aristocratic* military duties.

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<sup>351</sup> Carter, *Diary*, 406 & 85.

<sup>352</sup> Carter, *Diary*, 93.

<sup>353</sup> Carter, *Diary*, 93.

Yet, he stated with equal vigilance in 1776 that in all of his dealings with professional military officers, many of whom he saw as men with insatiable appetites for exerting power by force, he “never knew but one man who resolved to not to forget the citizen in the soldier or ruler and that is G.W. [George Washington].”<sup>354</sup>

Because of Carter’s extensive interest in science and medicine, some of his closest friends were physicians. Jack Greene notes that one of the proudest moments in Carter’s life came when the notable Philadelphia physician, Thomas Bond, singled out Carter’s amateur essay on the weevil fly and expressed his “highest opinion” of Carter’s “genius and abilities.”<sup>355</sup> Nevertheless, for all the value that Carter assigned to the opinions of professional physicians, he still denoted a difference in status between Virginia’s planter-physicians and less well-bred physicians who one day sought to be planters. Therefore, it was not terribly uncharacteristic when Carter adamantly objected to one of his family members marrying Dr. Elisha Hall simply on the basis that Hall was a non-FFV outsider, whose primary income came through his Fredericksburg medical practice, not planting.<sup>356</sup>

Despite all these negative critiques and/or characterizations of professionals, Carter could often be seen working pleasantly with them, building sound relationships along the way, and conceding the inextricable bond they had forged with so many of Virginia’s wealthiest planters. Although there were several FFV planter-physicians that Carter worked and socialized with—the most notable of which was probably Dr. Nicholas Flood—the sheer immensity of Carter’s plantation and slave holdings required

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<sup>354</sup> Carter, *Diary*, 1042.

<sup>355</sup> Greene, ed., *Diary*, 50.

<sup>356</sup> Carter, *Diary*, 1122.

that he rely on an even broader network of doctors. As a result, many of the physicians Carter became familiar with were men who perfectly fit the profile of upper-middling professionals.

Among a long list of doctors Carter patronized were Drs. Walter Jones, John Amson, Michael Wallace, Charles Mortimer, James McClurg, and George Pitt. Each of these men operated private practices in Virginia; and particularly in the cases of Jones, Wallace, Mortimer, and McClurg, they and their relations earned their way into the good graces of Virginia planters and improved their social statuses accordingly. Jones' father, Thomas, who was also a doctor, married into the prominent Cocke family of Virginia. Wallace, a Scotch immigrant, went from an apprenticeship with Maryland physician and planter, Dr. Gustavus Brown, to marrying one of Brown's daughters, establishing a very successful Virginia practice of his own, and becoming a wealthy planter thereafter. Additionally, while Mortimer's medical expertise distinguished him enough to become the first mayor of the town of Fredericksburg, McClurg eventually reached a point where his medical service to the Continental Army earned him an offer from Thomas Jefferson to assume the highly respectable political post of American Secretary of Foreign Affairs.<sup>357</sup>

As Carter also found himself in need of both legal advice and various consumer goods from time to time, it was a fairly regular occurrence for him to pay attorney's fees and/or patronize the stores of resident factors and local merchants. When Carter was not writing about how much he hated those associated with the mercantile and legal professions, he ironically managed to have some useful, amicable interactions with a

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<sup>357</sup> Carter, *Diary*, 644n, 128n, 143n, 915n, 244n, 1057n

number of merchants and lawyers. Again, by old planter-centric estimations, many of these men were mid-to-upper-middling outsiders. Yet, as Carter patronized and socialized with notable resident factors like James Hunter, sought the counsel of prominent lawyers like John Mercer, and witnessed successful merchants like James Mills marrying into noteworthy planter families like the Beverlys, it was clear that such men were becoming figures of consequence in Virginia society. Carter may not have liked it, but as long as professionals envisioned the planter ideal as their ultimate goal, he could at least take comfort in knowing that his level of socioeconomic and political status ultimately remained valued and intact.<sup>358</sup>

William Byrd III's relationships with professionals reflected a similar mode of contradictory behavior where uneasiness and acrimony in one instance could be overshadowed by more positive feelings the next. On the uneasy end of the spectrum, Byrd III faced a very serious financial problem that, by the 1760s, had become all too familiar to many of his fellow Tidewater planters. Due to the stress the Seven Years' War had placed on Great Britain's economy, the large loan balances of many Virginia planters were being called in early by British merchants at an alarming rate. Thus, as Byrd III continued to gamble away and foolishly invest the money that he did have, he ran the real risk of having some of his mercantile associates cut off his credit.

Considering that Virginia's tobacco culture was based on the expectation that credit would be eternally extended to gentlemen of rank, such a development called the very viability of planter dominance into question.<sup>359</sup> Under the previous system of easy credit, planters like Byrd III—who were rich in credit and land—could keep the illusion

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<sup>358</sup> Carter, *Diary*, 269n, 477, 267,

<sup>359</sup> Breen, *Tobacco Culture*

of solvency and infinite financial resources, no matter the reality. However, if planters were going to be called to reign in their lavish spending habits and even be taken to court for non-payment of credit bills, such illusions were certain to disappear, and with them, the façade of planter invincibility.

Because of these circumstances, Byrd III was doing more than just playing the role of a genteel planter in the years leading up to the American Revolution. He was also desperately attempting to find a creative way to pay back his creditors and maintain his socioeconomic standing. Particularly in the wake of a major investment debacle in the late 1760s where Byrd III, John Chiswell, and John Robinson illegally borrowed more than £100,000 from the colonial treasury and lost it all in a failed lead mine venture, Byrd III could sense trouble on the horizon. However, while Robinson had died and Chiswell had actually murdered a British merchant and then killed himself out of the fear of his imminent default, Byrd had not quite reached his point of no return.<sup>360</sup>

Instead, Byrd III resolved to scrape by as best he could. For instance, as Byrd III corresponded in 1770 with Samuel Inglis, a Virginia merchant and factor for the Philadelphia company, Willing and Morris, he asked if Inglis would be willing to apply 11,000 bushels of wheat to his bill in lieu of currency that was, in all likelihood, inaccessible to him at the time.<sup>361</sup> Moreover, Byrd III realized that his estate possessed significant value, so he got in touch with the prominent British mercantile firm Robert Cary and Co. to inquire into how he might convert some of his holdings into the cash he needed to pay off merchants' bills. When Cary and Co. responded that one of its

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<sup>360</sup> Woody Holton, *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 39-43.

<sup>361</sup> Byrd III, *Correspondence*, 778-79.



associates, Mr. Greenland, “could very easily . . . raise money on the estate,” Byrd III was forced to face the reality that he had to start selling off the assets of his family’s planter kingdom.<sup>362</sup> As Byrd III saw it, it was merchants who were facilitating his fall from grace. In fact, he later stated in his 1774 will that his debts “embitter every moment of my life.”<sup>363</sup> There is no denying that Byrd III’s suicide a couple years later was bound up in frustration over the actions and influence of at least one particular group of mercantile professionals.

However, in spite of Byrd III’s allegiance to the planter class and all that it stood for, he did not just move within planter circles. Rather, he also formed friendly relationships with a few mid-to-upper-middling Virginia professionals, even some merchants. To begin with, Byrd III’s service in the French and Indian War placed him squarely within a new fraternity of less-privileged Virginia officers whose bravery and decorated service records continued to improve their status after the war concluded. Subsequently, his correspondence from the 1750s forward indicated a particularly strong familiarity with some of the men from that network. Successful physician-soldiers like Hugh Mercer and Adam Stephen and the notable surveyor and soldier, William Preston, were just some of the men Byrd corresponded with. In fact, in 1775, when Byrd III last called upon Preston to assist one of his friends in surveying a western land claim, he felt compelled to remind Preston that he sincerely “trust[ed] in his friendship” and that he knew Preston was someone he could count on to do the job well.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> Byrd III, *Correspondence*, 783-84.

<sup>363</sup> Tinling, ed., *Correspondence*, 613.

<sup>364</sup> Byrd III, *Correspondence*, 804.

Byrd III's professional interactions did not begin and end with those he happened to encounter in his military service. For example, when Byrd III asked Robert Carter III of Nomini Plantation "to deliver a pipe of wine to Anthony Hay on his account" in February, 1770, he demonstrated that personal gestures of planter hospitality were not necessarily relegated to only planters.<sup>365</sup> On the contrary, the remarkable financial success that Hay enjoyed as a Williamsburg furniture-maker and owner of the Raleigh Tavern actually made him a man who planter-patrons deemed worthy of respect and good favor.

In more exceptional cases, Byrd III also had agreeable relationships with some Virginia merchants, most notably the brother merchant duo of Richard and Thomas Adams. The Adams' family Virginia progenitor, Ebenezer, was the son an English merchant-tailor who came to Virginia in 1714, advantageously married a member of the wealthy Cocke family, and laid the foundations for his sons to succeed in the mercantile trade and become wealthy planters themselves. As Richard stayed in New Kent County, Virginia and Thomas ended up running his end of the operation in London, the two became business associates of Byrd III who lived in the neighboring county.<sup>366</sup>

The Adams brothers had happily assisted Byrd III and many other planters in shipping their tobacco, acquiring European merchandise, and organizing fund-raising lotteries. Consequently, when Thomas Adams informed Byrd in 1768 that he had decided to expand the family's operations beyond the consignment market and entered into "a partnership with a gentleman of considerable fortune to commence [the business

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<sup>365</sup> Byrd III, *Correspondence*, 777.

<sup>366</sup> Richard Adams, "Letters of Richard Adams to Thomas Adams," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Oct., 1914), 379n.

of a] Virginia merchant,” he had no reservations in expressing his sincere hope that his enterprise would “meet with [Byrd III’s] countenance and encouragement.”<sup>367</sup> Certainly, as Byrd III pondered how Adams’ store would introduce yet another merchant into an environment that was increasingly overrun with non-planting traders, it might have irritated him to a degree. Yet, somewhere between realizing that such things were out of his control and taking solace in the fact that the Adams’ brothers basically represented a newer, harmless addition to a planter network that remained strong and dominant, Byrd III just accepted the change and forged ahead.

Even for a planter like John Tayloe II who, unlike many of his FFV contemporaries, managed and diversified his operations almost exactly like his father and remained solvent, Virginia professionals played a noticeable role in that process.<sup>368</sup> However, Tayloe II’s overall approach to Virginia professionals was somewhat different than those employed by planters like Landon Carter and William Byrd III. In fact, Tayloe II was one old-guard Virginian who expertly relied on both his affluence and cultural allure as an elite planter to dictate terms to professionals up front and utilize their labor, services, and talents accordingly.

Historian Laura Kamoie concedes that for all the credit that could be given to Tayloe II for his great success, by the mid eighteenth century, his iron operations, numerous plantations, and auxiliary business ventures never would have been able to succeed “without the efforts of his numerous managers, clerks, indentured servants, and

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<sup>367</sup> Byrd III, *Correspondence*, 774-75.

<sup>368</sup> For a comparative look at the overall balance sheets and solvency of several notable FFVs throughout the eighteenth-century, see Emory G. Evans, *A "Topping People" : The Rise and Decline of Virginia's Old Political Elite, 1680-1790* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 115.

slaves.”<sup>369</sup> Indeed, as such “managers and agents provided the key link between Tayloe and various parts of his estate,” he found himself placing a great deal of responsibility into the hands of various middlemen, many of whom may not have plied standard, traditional professions, but who possessed and utilized specific forms of professional expertise nonetheless. Kamoie also notes that because these men realized that they were a cut above common white overseers, they understood that by doing their best to make Tayloe II’s business run efficiently and profitably, they stood to improve their own status and reap financial rewards.<sup>370</sup>

Thomas Lawson (not to be confused with Landon Carter’s overseer) provides a classic case in point. Although Lawson was, by no means, one of the lucky few professionals to eventually climb up to with the planter class, he earned enough money throughout his lifetime and made enough important decisions on behalf of an FFV planter to stand out above others of similar middling backgrounds. Kamoie writes that while “Lawson received 100 pounds currency annually for the management of both” the Neabsco and Occoquan Ironworks, he also tended to a seemingly endless number of other tasks that Tayloe II could not find time to address. Just a few of Lawson’s duties included “handling leases and rents, coordinat[ing] supplies and slave labor, supervis[ing] shipbuilding activities and mill operations, negotiate[ing] labor contracts, and correspond[ing] with Tayloe’s business associates.”<sup>371</sup> In short, Lawson had a very important non-planting job in a planter’s world.

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<sup>369</sup> Kamoie, *Irons in the Fire*, 81.

<sup>370</sup> Kamoie, *Irons in the Fire*, 81.

<sup>371</sup> Kamoie, *Irons in the Fire*, 81.

Yet, at the same time he utilized the labor of such men, Tayloe II always remained steadfastly committed to never reaching a point where he was as beholden to men like Lawson as they were beholden to him. After all, Tayloe II had already reached the apex of financial success, personal independence, and social rank in Virginia. It was because of this reality that he and his son were able to pay Lawson and others like him respectable full-time salaries in the first place. If anything, most of the professionals who worked for or with John Tayloe II ultimately wanted their own share of the planter's dream that the Tayloe family and other FFVs had already attained. Realizing that this truth was a powerful form of motivation in and of itself, Tayloe II could rest easy even if a few *nouveau riche*, professional outsiders occasionally happened to fulfill their dreams of becoming Virginia planters.

Furthermore, by taking the initiative to extend various opportunities to new professionals that came into Virginia, Tayloe II intrinsically established himself as a professional benefactor. For instance, the successful Williamsburg surgeon, Dr. James Carter, would not have been able to build a home or establish his practice in the city so easily in 1760 had not Tayloe II first offered to sell Carter and his wife, Hester, two of his town lots for the sum of £600.<sup>372</sup> Similarly, as Tayloe II also loaned money to numerous Virginia and Maryland ironmasters who needed to settle outstanding debts, he smartly managed to stay one step ahead of the middlemen who kept his own iron operations afloat—not just by helping to keep them solvent, but also by turning a tidy profit for himself on the interest.<sup>373</sup> Over time, these little things added up and collectively assigned more power and less dependency to Tayloe II. Therefore, while other Tidewater

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<sup>372</sup> Bond, James Carter to John Tayloe, 21 April, 1760. Tazewell Family Papers, Folder 3, *LVA*

<sup>373</sup> Kamoie, *Irons in the Fire*, 51.

planters of Tayloe II's generation often had a hard time accepting the fact that professionals were assuming many of the tasks their forefathers had singularly handled, Tayloe II assessed his planter leverage with clarity and accepted professionals into Virginian society on his own terms.

Perhaps no two Virginians found themselves more uniquely bound to the interests of both planters and professionals than George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. Geographically situated in Virginia's Northern Piedmont region and more sincerely committed to the egalitarian principles of the American Revolution than most men of their stature and social station, Washington and Jefferson represented a newer, forward-thinking segment of the colony's planter network. As historian Courtlandt Canby notes, those who fit this profile were considerably "more western . . . more democratic . . . less arrogant . . . less pretentious . . . [and] more receptive to new ideas" than their "aristocratic cousins" in the Tidewater.<sup>374</sup> Furthermore, the idea of coexisting with similarly wealthy and enlightened professionals in a more meritocratic society was not distasteful to such planters. In fact, if Washington's and Jefferson's family backgrounds, work experiences, and close friendships provide any indication, each man actually embraced such ideas.

Not only did Washington and Jefferson both deliberately pursue full-time careers in non-planting professions at young ages, but their families had also gone through isolated periods of time in which lower-tier, *aristocratic* status in Virginia was a better description of their circumstances. Consequently, both Washington and Jefferson could relate to the situation of fellow colonists who were by no means poor, yet not particularly

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<sup>374</sup> Courtlandt Canby, "The Commonplace Book of Doctor George Gilmer," *VMHB*, Vol. 56, No. 4 (Oct., 1948), 380.

elite either. This made them more inclined to befriend talented, middling professionals rather than instantly balk at them because of their trades or hereditary shortcomings. Thus, while planters like Carter, Byrd III, and Tayloe II had more mercurial interactions with professionals and accepted their presence with considerable caution, Washington and Jefferson were much more active in encouraging and enhancing the influence and affluence of Virginia's professionals.

There are several reasons why Washington and Jefferson were particularly conditioned to develop and implement this approach, many of which concern the boyhood impressions they had of professionals and their own full-time, non-planting work experiences as young adults. Yet, before one can appreciate how those circumstances helped shape their progressive worldviews as planters, some class-oriented irregularities within their family trees deserve attention, especially since they indicate that each man had at least some appreciation for what it meant to exist on the periphery of the planter class. This is not meant to imply that Washington and Jefferson did not see themselves as genteel members of the planter class by the mid eighteenth century because they certainly did. Nor should one infer that either man was somehow hampered by underprivileged circumstances. On the contrary, both men's families had sound reputations and substantial FFV ties by the mid eighteenth century. Both Washington's father and mother were descended from well-established planter families and Jefferson's mother was a member of the Randolph family—a planter clan whose first progenitors have been jokingly referred by many as the Adam and Eve of Virginia. However, when one begins to look a little deeper, it becomes clear that the Washington and Jefferson

families, unlike some longer-established FFVs, were not always at the forefront of elite Virginia society.

In Washington's case, a downward fluctuation in his family's status occurred just a decade after he was born. Although Washington's father, Augustine, was a third generation Virginia planter of notable pedigree, he had married twice and fathered multiple children by both women. While this was hardly an uncommon occurrence in colonial America, the Washington family's assets did not quite equal those of other FFVs like the Fairfaxes, Carters, Randolphs, Tayloes, Harrisons, Lees, Pages, Burwells, or Byrds. Even though the holdings that Augustine Washington and his ancestors had accumulated were fairly considerable, they were not substantial enough to ensure that every individual in his large, two-part family could lead lives of leisure when he died. There were simply too many beneficiaries to consider. And even if Augustine Washington chose to leave greater shares of his fortune to fewer family members, he faced another dilemma: whether to give preference to the adult sons from his first marriage or to his widow and young family.

Unfortunately for young George, his mother, and his four full siblings, when Augustine Washington died in 1743, he assigned the bulk of his inheritance to the sons from his first marriage and left the secondary assets to the rest of his family. In addition to inheriting a significant interest in his father's iron-ore mine, the eldest son Lawrence Washington received Hunting Creek Plantation, while the second oldest, Augustine Washington II, received Pope's Creek Plantation. Both properties were considered to be the choicest of the Washington family's lands. The Washingtons of Ferry Farm, on the other hand, inherited a homestead and social standing incommensurate with that of past



and present family members of the first marriage. Certainly, George Washington still had his father's name and the influence of his half-brothers working to his advantage. However, if he expected to graduate from the fringes of the Virginia gentry and establish himself more firmly within the class of his elite planter forefathers, he would have to depend heavily on his own aptitude and ambition to make it happen.<sup>375</sup>

Thomas Jefferson's father, Peter, and the two paternal ancestors who preceded him in Virginia, Thomas Jeffersons I & II, illustrate another such irregularity in familial status. However, while the value of a previously established birthright took a minor hit in Washington's case, Thomas Jefferson's situation was different. In Jefferson's case, his family's elevated place among Virginia's planter *aristocracy* had not always been the result of a longstanding birthright. Rather, the level of the Jefferson family's wealth and social distinction in the period separating Thomas Jefferson I and his grandson, Peter Jefferson, increased drastically over time.

Most historians have concluded that on the basis of militia rank, office-holding, and involvement with genteel forms of recreation like horse-racing, Thomas Jefferson II had established himself as a gentleman of respectability within the colony by the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>376</sup> Such conclusions, however, can be a tad misleading when assessing the overall status of Jefferson family in Virginia. Much like in the case of Augustine Washington, when Jefferson II's situation is compared to the wealth, landholdings, and political prominence of his more substantial FFV contemporaries, he was significantly less prominent.

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<sup>375</sup> Freeman and Harwell, *Washington*, 1-12.

<sup>376</sup> Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, 8.

Moreover, as Jefferson biographer Dumas Malone and current Monticello guide Lynn Scott note, Thomas Jefferson II's father was far from privileged when he first came to Virginia in the mid seventeenth century. Malone, who concluded that Thomas Jefferson I was, in all likelihood, a yeoman farmer, points out that the only way that he was even able to gain his modest land holdings in Virginia was through the good graces of the wealthy planter and fur-trader, William Byrd I.<sup>377</sup> Scott goes a step further. After combing through numerous genealogical records, Scott has strong reasons to suggest that Thomas Jefferson I may have actually been an indentured servant who, at a planter's behest, came from Yorkshire to Virginia.<sup>378</sup> Needless to say, by the time that Peter Jefferson's marriage to Jane Randolph catapulted him from the fringes of Virginia's *aristocracy* to its inner-sanctum, the Jefferson family's position was actually more reminiscent of how various Second Families of Virginia climbed into the planter class than it was the result of hereditary title.

Such irregularities in what might otherwise appear to be perpetually dominant FFV lines were not lost on Washington and Jefferson. In fact, as each of them internalized the reality of their families' imperfections from youth through adulthood, it seems to have subconsciously engendered a respect for all talented, hard-working white people regardless of social background. Considering that Washington and Jefferson were hardly the only well-to-do planters in the colony whose families could relate to such experiences, that respect proved critical for the rise of Virginia professionals. It reflected a growing appreciation among planters for what professionals had to offer society and

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<sup>377</sup> Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, 6-8.

<sup>378</sup> Lynn Scott, "The Jeffersons: from Virginia to Yorkshire," International Center for Jefferson Studies (ICJS) Fellows Forum Presentation, 2 December, 2008.

demonstrated an equally empathetic sensibility for their desire to convert hard work and enterprise into a higher social status and better way of life.

Take, for example, the admiration that Thomas Jefferson expressed in his autobiography for his father, Peter Jefferson. Although Thomas Jefferson claimed to know little about his father's family and later declared that family lineage was not a matter of major concern, there is no denying that he exhibited a certain level of provincial pride in the man who came before him. While Jefferson lamented the fact that his father's "education had been much neglected" and implied that his father lacked the genteel polish of the colony's Tidewater elite, he was equally prideful in pointing out that his father had nevertheless managed to improve the overall lot of himself and his family on the merits of his own deeds and hard work, not through any entitled rite of passage.<sup>379</sup> Consequently, while Jefferson never doubted his own elite designation, it was hardly beneath him to support and/or laud a case of well-deserved social advancement. Nor was he so naïve as to think that his father's family had been elite all along.

Additionally, one cannot forget that Peter Jefferson's greatest distinction and legacy in the eyes of his son and his colonial Virginia contemporaries was not that he was the owner of a magnificent, sprawling plantation or even that he had secured an advantageous marriage to a Randolph, but that he was a very accomplished surveyor. When the famous surveyor and civil engineer, William Mayo, died in 1744 and left Virginia without its most distinguished point-man for western exploration and urban development, Peter Jefferson stepped into that role and became one of several very

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<sup>379</sup> Thomas Jefferson, Paul Leicester Ford, and George Haven Putnam, eds. *Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson, 1743-1790* (New York and London, G. P. Putnam's sons, 1914), 3-5. For another brief analysis of Jefferson's reflections on his father's education and polish, see Malone, *Jefferson and His Times*, 5.

important torchbearers for the surveying profession in Virginia. In fact, he worked extensively with William and Mary mathematics professor Joshua Fry to produce one of, if not *the* most important, maps of the colony.<sup>380</sup> Thomas Jefferson embraced all of these slightly less refined, but respectable elements of his father's western, *aristocratic* identity, wrote confidently about them, and emulated them more than he did the more exclusive attitudes and manners of his Randolph brethren.

Jefferson's reflections on the value of non-planting occupations and the high regard he expressed for professional men also say a great deal about his professional sensibilities and willingness to expand his horizons beyond the planting realm. For example, Jefferson's decision to go to college was largely inspired by a desire to break away from Virginia's planting culture and fulfill a fascination he had with learning. In 1760, when Jefferson wrote to his guardian John Harvie about wanting to continue his education at college, the young man's rationale for doing so was that he desired to improve himself and quit wasting so much time entertaining company.<sup>381</sup> Clearly, this was a far cry from the entitled and lazy characterizations so often associated with the sons of the eighteenth-century Virginia gentry. It was, instead, more consistent with that of the hard-working Peter Jefferson—someone who sought to improve his circumstances by expanding his knowledge, diversifying his skills, and potentially training in a profession other than tobacco planting and estate management.

While it should be pointed out that this letter to Harvie did not explicitly reference pursuing a profession, Jefferson later made the letter's meaning much clearer when he

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<sup>380</sup> Malone, *Jefferson and His Times*, 18-26.

<sup>381</sup> Thomas Jefferson to John Harvie, 14 January, 1760. Harvie Family Information File, ICJS, Charlottesville, Virginia.

specifically told his grandson, Thomas Jefferson Randolph, that his decision to go to college corresponded with his desire to gain professional experience outside of planting. Jefferson's message, in fact, made a crystal-clear delineation between going to college to become a respectable professional with planting interests or choosing to live the life of a genteel, but idle Virginia planter who could do little else. Claiming that when he decided to attend the College of William and Mary, he had to make an important choice about whether to fall in with the "horse racers, fox hunters, and card players" of Virginia's planter society or join the ranks of "scientific, professional, and dignified men," Jefferson forewarned his grandson that as he too would have to take such matters under consideration, it would serve him best to pursue the latter course of action.<sup>382</sup>

George Washington exhibited a similar appreciation for professionals at a young age. However, while a teenage Jefferson generally acknowledged himself as a young planter in search of formal professional enrichment, Washington could not really afford to see himself in quite the same light in that stage of his life. Only after Washington's half-brother, Lawrence, died in 1752 and left Washington with the opportunity to lease and later inherit Mount Vernon Plantation, did friends and neighbors begin to differentiate between Washington and "the second rate gentry who may visit [him] as a planter."<sup>383</sup> Consequently, Washington developed interests in a multitude of careers throughout his young adulthood, none of which placed an emphasis on plantation management.

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<sup>382</sup> Sarah N. Randolph, *The Domestic Life of Thomas Jefferson, comp. from Family Letters and Reminiscences, by his Great Granddaughter*. (New York: Harper, 1871), 25-26.

<sup>383</sup> Robert Jackson to George Washington, 1752. *GW Papers*, Digital Edition.

One of Washington's earliest professional designs was to secure an apprenticeship at sea in hopes that he could one day become a successful ship's captain. A Fredericksburg merchant, Robert Jackson, was instrumental in encouraging young George to pursue this path, and it seemed like a wonderful, adventurous opportunity for Washington until his mother grew concerned for his safety and forbid it.<sup>384</sup> Realizing that there was also potential to make a good living as a surveyor, Washington tried his hand at that occupation too. Because Lawrence Washington married Ann Fairfax, the younger Washington was given the chance to become quite familiar with the members of the wealthy Fairfax family and gain their patronage. Thus, when Lord Fairfax needed to survey the vast Virginia acreage bequeathed to him by King George II, Washington was able to earn good money by taking part in the surveying expedition and gaining valuable professional experience on the western frontier.<sup>385</sup>

Of course, one cannot fully understand Washington's formative appreciation for professionals without addressing his early fascination with the military. Consumed with an undying affection for his half-brother and mentor, Lawrence, George Washington naturally wanted to emulate him in every possible way. Since Lawrence had been a captain in His Majesty's Virginia forces during the War of Jenkins' Ear and later assumed the rank of major as one of Virginia's Adjutants, Washington listened with awe and amazement whenever his brother told stories about the West Indian campaigns and his great fortune in surviving Admiral Edward Vernon's ill-fated attack against the Spanish at Cartagena in 1741. While Freeman and Harwell note that Lawrence Washington never commanded troops during the battle, George Washington could still

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<sup>384</sup> Crackel, ed. note per Robert Jackson to George Washington, 1752. *GW Papers*, Digital Edition.

<sup>385</sup> Freeman and Harwell, *Washington*, 17-22.

not help being fascinated by the fact that his half-brother had actually “seen the forts of Cartagena, had heard the cannons roar, and had watched the battle.”<sup>386</sup>

Although such boyhood impressions were undoubtedly misguided by romanticized images of war and the glory of professional soldiery, they stayed with George Washington for the rest of his life. Indeed, shortly after a party of provincial troops and Indians under Washington’s command ignited the French and Indian War in 1754 by attacking a French encampment and killing the French ambassador, Jumonville, Washington attempted to glorify the specter of the battle that ensued. In an oft-quoted narrative in which he recounted the events of Jumonville Glen, Washington stated: “I heard bullets whistle and believe me, there is something charming in the sound.”<sup>387</sup> Furthermore, as historians like Joseph Ellis and Ed Lengle have alluded to the fact that Washington’s most significant lifetime achievements were either forged in battle or the political byproducts of the military fame he gained in the French and Indian War and War for Independence, much can be said for Washington ultimately seeing himself as more of a soldier than a planter.<sup>388</sup>

There is even more to be learned about Washington’s and Jefferson’s professional sensibilities by looking at how the full-time experiences they respectively had as a soldier and lawyer enhanced their status and put them into contact with fellow professionals, many of whom they interacted favorably with. For Washington, soldiery provided the best way for him to gain a reputation worthy of advancement. In fact, when Washington assumed a part of his half-brother’s former responsibilities as Virginia Adjutant, gained

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<sup>386</sup> Freeman and Harwell, *Washington*, 6-7.

<sup>387</sup> George Washington, “Expedition to the Ohio, 1754: Narrative,” *GW Papers*, Digital Edition.

<sup>388</sup> Edward G. Lengel, *General George Washington: A Military Life*, Paperback Edition (New York: Random House, 2007); Joseph Ellis, *His Excellency, George Washington* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004).

the rank of Major, and was awarded an annual salary of £100, he sensed that he had finally begun to rise above his lesser inheritance.<sup>389</sup> Furthermore, by the time that French encroachments into the Ohio Country were seen as a matter of major concern to both colonial and British authorities, the numerous military roles Colonel Washington assumed thereafter in the French and Indian War only ended up confirming his inclination.

While Washington experienced his fair share of hardship and failure on the road to military success, he quickly learned that if he ever hoped to gain distinction for himself, he would have to depend heavily on the talents and skills of those who served alongside him. Naturally, due to the customs of Virginia's *aristocracy*, many of the highest ranking officers in the Virginia Regiment during the French and Indian War were the sons of wealthy planter families. Yet, many other soldiers of note that served with Washington were far from blueblood Virginia planters. Some were middling immigrant-professionals who practiced their trades in a military context. Others were simply low-to-middling colonists whose decorated service ultimately enabled them to assume respectable military posts beyond the French and Indian War. Many of the relationships Washington forged with these professionals in his early military career lasted throughout his life, and many resurfaced during the American Revolution. Moreover, they helped Washington establish a certain comfort level with professionals that would later serve him well as a major planter.

Not surprisingly, one group of professionals that Colonel Washington became especially familiar with while commanding the Virginia Regiment were merchants.

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<sup>389</sup> Freeman and Harwell, *Washington*, 32-33.



Because Washington's troops were continually in need of food, clothing, guns, tools, wagons, and ammunition, various merchants and traders assumed a number of supporting roles in the effort to drive the French from the Ohio Country. For some of the more successful merchants like Thomas Carlyle and Charles Dick, who had already been absorbed into Virginia's upper social strata, official government commissions put them in position to sell the army various supplies through their own stores. Alexander Boyd, who "bought land on the Roanoke River . . . and established himself there as a merchant," was contracted as a paymaster for Virginia forces.<sup>390</sup> Meanwhile, other local merchants like Daniel Campbell and Alexander Wodrow of Falmouth—both of whom belonged to Washington's Masonic Lodge—contributed to the war effort by enlisting as sutlers.<sup>391</sup>

Washington corresponded regularly with all of these men and recognized that his own military livelihood was dependent on how efficiently they provided their services. And while much of the correspondence between Colonel Washington and his merchant contacts admittedly concerned the tedious, administrative side of running the regiment, Washington's conversations with other merchants like Allan Macrae indicate that his relationships with merchants could also extend beyond business. In a letter to Washington in 1754, Macrae—a Scotch merchant who operated out of Dumfries—managed to discuss the latest politics and fundraising dilemmas of the General Assembly, as well as the health of a mutual friend, Mrs. Fairfax, without once discussing mercantile business.<sup>392</sup> Considering that Washington also arranged a commission for the son of Fredericksburg merchant Anthony Strother in 1755 and kept active his father's previous

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<sup>390</sup> Crackel, ed., biographical note for Boyd in *GW Papers*, Digital Edition

<sup>391</sup> Crackel, ed., biographical notes for Campbell, and Wodrow in *GW Papers*, Digital Edition.

<sup>392</sup> Allan Macrae to George Washington, 3 September, 1754. *GW Papers*, Digital Edition.

relationships with local merchants like Robert Jackson and Nathaniel Chapman, such familiar, good-natured correspondence with mercantile men was not out of the ordinary.<sup>393</sup>

Washington built even stronger and longer-lasting relationships with several army physicians and fellow soldiers from his French and Indian War service. Drs. Hugh Mercer, Adam Stephen, James Craik, and William Fleming were just a few notable doctors and surgeons of mid-to-upper-middling stock who Washington came to respect greatly. Not only did some of these men provide an indispensable service to the army through their medical expertise, but in the cases of Mercer and Stephen, they also impressed Washington with their ability to command troops—something they continued to do during America’s War for Independence.

Likewise, Washington gained an appreciation for the sort of rugged Virginia frontiersman who used their French and Indian War service as a means of mastering colonial Indian warfare. Therefore, even while Washington did not develop especially close bonds with the likes of Arthur Campbell, Daniel Morgan, and Benjamin Logan in his early military career, he made it a point by the American Revolution to familiarize himself with such men. Furthermore, Washington went out his way to acknowledge their skills as professional soldiers, seek their advice, and reward them with key posts within Virginia’s military forces. By the time the French and Indian War was over and a newly-wedded Washington embarked on his new civilian role as a planter, he had already been exposed to so many different types of professionals from so many different walks of life that he felt relatively comfortable coexisting with such men.

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<sup>393</sup> Anthony Strother to George Washington, 9 July, 1755. *GW Papers*, Digital Edition. Also see Crackel, ed., biographical notes on Robert Jackson and Nathaniel Chapman, *GW Papers*, Digital Edition.

In much the same way that Washington was a transitional agent in the overlapping worlds of Virginia's professionals and planters, Thomas Jefferson's brief foray into the world of a full-time, practicing attorney was transitional as well. This was mainly due to the fact that the legal profession in Virginia had changed immensely between the beginning of the eighteenth century and the time that Jefferson began practicing in the 1760s. Just as Jefferson broke from some of the old Tidewater traditions to become a new kind of western planter, he was also part of Virginia's new generation of lawyers—men whose service-based functions, legal educations, and overall social composition were radical departures from the days where only an elite few Virginia planters attended the British Inns at Court and dabbled in law mainly to ensure political and economic advantages at home.

By the time that Jefferson studied law at William and Mary, these greater changes in the profession were already reflected in the College's curriculum. Concomitantly, the changes also affected the nature of his legal practice and the ways in which he and his colleagues within the legal fraternity began to view their occupation. One clue towards this determination rests in Jefferson's memorandum books, where it is clear that he not only handled a wide variety of small-claims cases, but also a large number of them. This was something that was not nearly as prevalent among earlier members of the General Court who, because of their guaranteed salaries, took on much smaller caseloads and tended to work only on the major high-court appeals that came before them.

Jefferson, however, handled suits in both Virginia's General and county courts and consistently worked on a substantial number of small—and sometimes frivolous--cases. In fact, he and many of his legal contemporaries increasingly associated the legal

profession with fairness and a duty to provide counsel to any reasonable, paying client. Thus, while Jefferson technically met the criteria of earlier General Court members who could look upon their legal practices with some indifference because of their social status and regular planting incomes, he nevertheless exhibited certain tendencies that went against such trends.

When one considers that some of Jefferson's most esteemed correspondents ended up being fellow lawyers like Patrick Henry, Edmund Pendleton, and St. George Tucker, it becomes even clearer just how inherently Jefferson's life and identity were bound up not only in his own work experiences as an attorney, but the overall emergence of mid-to-upper-middling professionals. Each one of aforementioned individuals rose from relatively modest backgrounds to levels of status that were virtually on par with a planter like Jefferson. Yet none of them would have likely been able to do so had it not been for the upwardly-mobile opportunities provided by Virginia's growing legal profession—something which Jefferson's actions clearly endorsed.<sup>394</sup> Needless to say, between all these non-planting experiences that Washington and Jefferson had and the numerous professional relationships that they continued to forge in their later years as plantation managers, they each found themselves constantly involved with professionals from the mid-1760s forward.

Take, for instance, some of Washington's primary planting activities between roughly 1768 and 1771. In the middle of that period, Washington increasingly began to obsess over new ways to further diversify and expand his planting operations beyond the confines of Mount Vernon. Washington was especially interested in the possibility of

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<sup>394</sup> For further analysis on Jefferson's experiences as a lawyer, see Dewey, *Thomas Jefferson, Lawyer*.

quitting tobacco planting altogether and focusing more on growing wheat—an idea that he had been experimenting with on his Potomac River properties for a few years.

Washington was also intrigued with prospect of acquiring new western lands around the Virginia-Pennsylvania border, improving their functionality, and establishing a broader base on such lands for the wheat and iron trade.<sup>395</sup>

Up to that point in time, Washington's stake in the colony's iron trade was much like that of most Virginia planters in that it served as a modest form of diversification. He owned some land that was potentially rich in iron-ore, and with the small amount of iron he actually had in his possession, he had his slaves produce and sell an assortment of iron wares at his plantation's blacksmith shop. Clearly though, he felt like he could be doing more and making more money in the iron trade. Thus, while Mount Vernon was already a profitable, sprawling mini-town which provided a number of goods and services to Fairfax County residents, his desire to creatively extend his sphere of influence spoke volumes about Washington's willingness to consider new things.<sup>396</sup>

However, turning Washington's big ideas into successful realities depended on overcoming a variety of obstacles. For example, Washington could detect—particularly when he looked just to the north and west of his location—that the domestic wheat trade had the potential to be very lucrative in Virginia. Cereal, unlike tobacco, had proven to be a relatively price-steady commodity in the colonies up to that point and it did not require a large and costly slave labor force to harvest. Yet, by the same token, Washington also understood that if he decided to change his plantation's focus entirely to wheat, someone who was officially connected to the colony's commercial realm would

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<sup>395</sup> Freeman and Harwell, 167.

<sup>396</sup> Kamoie, *Irons in the Fire*, 53-54.

have to prove to him that the net margins on his crop sales would at least have to be comparable, if not reasonably better, than what he was getting on tobacco sales.

Otherwise, the venture would be too much of a gamble.

Furthermore, as Washington pondered the logistics of how to best transport and sell his wheat and iron, he needed some assurances that if he moved forward with his new plan, he would be conveniently and accessibly tied to the most immediate markets. This meant that he would have to purchase the choicest western lands available and recruit new tenants into the significantly less-settled frontier regions of northwestern Virginia and Pennsylvania. Guarantees for navigational and infrastructural improvements along the Potomac and Kanawha Rivers (i.e. canals, river-to-road access, land development etc.), were just a few more assurances Washington sought. After all, new trading posts, mills, and towns along the major waterways would only be as good and profitable as people's ability to reach them safely and the land owners' abilities to attract new settlers, charge quitrents, and extract port-entry tolls. Needless to say, none of these problems were miniscule. And because solving them would require several specialists with specific disciplines, it was no coincidence that Washington soon found himself inherently enmeshed in a network of various professionals, namely merchants, iron and development entrepreneurs, and land agents.

As Freeman and Harwell note, one of the primary figures that Washington initially used in relation to his wheat experiment was the former French and Indian War commissary and Alexandria merchant, John Carlyle. Washington had been consigning his experimental wheat crop to the firm of Carlyle and Adam for several years in hopes that he could get an accurate estimate of wheat's potential for long-term price resilience

and profitability. While the relationship that Washington had with Carlyle had been fairly profitable, it had also been rather testy at times. Consequently, when Washington started to more aggressively investigate and assess the profits that both Carlyle and his miller associates had cleared with his wheat over the lengthy period of their business dealings, he was probably already looking for a way out.<sup>397</sup>

Indeed, once Washington did the math and realized that both Carlyle and the millers had made hefty profits even in the midst of moderate market fluctuations, he felt a little cheated. Furthermore, Washington concluded that he could keep much of the money himself if he just cut out the services of a miller and sold processed wheat directly to merchants and neighbors. With this in mind, Washington immediately gave the order to start building a mill for grinding flour and reached out to the Dumfries merchant, William Carr, to gauge his willingness and capacity for transporting flour to market.<sup>398</sup>

In order to improve river navigation for the iron trade, Washington turned to the much-maligned iron manufacturer and land developer John Semple who, despite his consistent habit of losing planters' money, was still a sought-after consultant. Although Semple had originally expressed enthusiasm for Washington's interest in digging large canals into the banks of the Potomac, using toll proceeds as reimbursement for "adventurer" financiers, and implementing various other "improvements" along the fall line, he sadly reported to Washington that by his most recent calculations, such a project would require more private funds and investors than they could readily muster.<sup>399</sup>

Clearly, Washington wanted to make the Potomac project work, but given Semple's

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<sup>397</sup> For an account of George Washington's personal mercantile dealings with Carlyle and Adam, see Freeman and Harwell, *Washington*, 155, 166, 180, and 185.

<sup>398</sup> Freeman and Harwell, *Washington*, 180. Also see William Carr to George Washington, 17 December, 1770. *GW Papers, Digital Edition*

<sup>399</sup> John Semple to George Washington, 8 January, 1770. *GW Papers, Digital Edition*

extensive experience with setting up iron foundries along major waterways, he conceded that it was a project that would probably have to wait.

Washington's western land speculation prospects were another matter. According to an oft-overlooked clause within the Proclamation Act of 1763, Washington knew that the western land bounties the colonial government originally promised to give Virginia soldiers in 1754 were technically available to be surveyed and claimed if the veterans wished to pursue them. Washington realized that he had somewhere in the range of 10,000 to 15,000 acres that were sitting idle and unimproved, waiting to be surveyed. Yet, because the most obvious thrust of the Proclamation Act was to cease westward expansion past the Appalachian Mountains, Washington and many other veterans had good reason to believe that the government would not fulfill its promise of exchanging land for service, especially since so much of the available land rested past the Proclamation line in the Ohio Country.<sup>400</sup> However, Washington was hungry for land. And while Semple's recommendations had marked a setback in his greater plans, Washington still wanted to be the one holding the best lands if and when the opportunities for development came to fruition.

Washington could not carry this task out alone. He needed a dependable and trustworthy surveyor to measure and mark the territory. Fortunately, one of Washington's old comrades in arms fit the bill perfectly. William Crawford, originally of Orange County Virginia, made his living primarily through a combination of surveying and soldiering.<sup>401</sup> And since there was no war going on when Washington contacted him,

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<sup>400</sup> Freeman and Harwell, *Washington*, 180-81.

<sup>401</sup> James H. Anderson, *Colonel William Crawford* (Columbus: Ohio Archeological and Historical Publications, 1898); reprinted edition posted through the official website of the Ohio Historical Society



Crawford was more than happy to assist his friend and former commander on such a big and potentially lucrative job. Therefore, after Washington gauged the interest that veterans had in claiming their lands—and also purchased his own share of unwanted land warrants for a mere penance—he and Dr. James Craik journeyed west to meet up with several other former officers near the Kanawha River. Not only did they anticipate settling the land bounty issue on behalf of their fellow veterans, but they also planned to lay claim to their own significant parcels of western territory.<sup>402</sup>

Overall, several interesting things stand out about the ways these loosely related activities played out for Washington between 1768 and 1770. First, most all the professionals Washington dealt with in each scenario had already gained enough success and planter connections by that point to consider themselves part of Virginia's upper-crust. In the case of Crawford and Craik, they could even consider themselves Washington's dear and trusted friends. Secondly, Washington did not hesitate to call on any of them for their help or expertise when he needed their assistance. Their presence and function was considered a natural part of the environment.

Lastly, Washington managed to work with them all without cursing their professions or worrying about them encroaching on the social domain of Virginia's planters; he demonstrated an almost complete form of acceptance. Granted, Washington did not get along with every professional he encountered, and it did not hurt that he already had everything that he could have asked for in Virginia's environment. Yet, his general willingness to indulge an assortment of non-planting professionals in their own

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<http://publications.ohiohistory.org/ohstemplate.cfm?action=detail&Page=00061.html&StartPage=1&EndPage=34&volume=6&newtitle=Volume%206%20Page%201> Accessed 5 February, 2013.

<sup>402</sup> Freeman and Harwell, *Washington*, 168-69 & 183-85.

social climbing pursuits spoke volumes for the new direction that the planter class was heading and the new members it was taking on.

When juxtaposed with Washington around the same time period, Jefferson too could be found seeking out and patronizing a wide variety of Virginia professionals, albeit those who more clearly fell into the categories of skilled craftsmen, merchants, and miscellaneous service providers. In fact, if Jefferson's cash accounts offer any indication, he relied extensively on the goods and services such professionals provided. Not only did they help to satisfy Jefferson's personal proclivity for conspicuous consumption, but they also granted him access to the building materials, furnishings, and other necessary goods and services he needed to make Monticello the grand estate he envisioned.

Such expenditures were particularly noticeable whenever Jefferson's General Court duties caused him to leave Albemarle County and reside in Williamsburg for extended periods of time. Jefferson's living quarters, for instance, were rented at an annual rate of roughly £13 from the Virginia merchant, Richard Adams, who then turned around and paid the successful contractor, Humphrey Harwood, for plaster repairs that the room needed during Jefferson's stay. Additionally, while Jefferson made numerous daily trips to Williamsburg's coffee houses and taverns throughout the late 1760s and early 1770s, he also spent a relatively substantial amount of money on personal grooming and various forms of entertainment, the latter which included multiple plays and puppet shows. Consequently, niche-professionals like Anthony Hay and Richard Charlton were especially grateful for Jefferson's spending habits. Not only could Jefferson be seen settling accounts with Hay and Charlton for their furniture-making and barber businesses,

respectively, but he was also drinking and dining in the establishments that they had purchased with savings from their primary occupations.<sup>403</sup>

Transactions with merchant storekeepers, doctors, and skilled craftsmen also dotted Jefferson's cash accounts during this period of his life. For specific kinds of metal work that could not yet be completed on his own plantation, Jefferson patronized blacksmith James Anderson and bought finished goods from silversmiths like James Geddy Jr. and James Galt. For his personal health needs, as well as those of his wife, Jefferson consulted with Dr. William Pasteur, repeatedly purchased drugs at Williamsburg apothecary shops, and even sought out the "prominent surgeon-dentist" John Baker for several procedures. Moreover, as Jefferson settled accounts with several of Williamsburg's more notable merchant storekeepers like John Greenhow, John Prentis, or John Thompson, he continued to maintain a personal, consumer-oriented connection to the mercantile profession. As it was not out-of-the-ordinary to see Jefferson represent Virginia merchants like William Allason and John Carlyle in court cases, it is also apparent that Jefferson did not necessarily have to seek out goods or services to come into regular contact with members of the mercantile profession.<sup>404</sup>

When Jefferson's plantation duties in Albemarle County prevented convenient access to the kinds of professionals that lived and worked in Williamsburg, he simply found country alternatives. If necessary, he could count on being able to purchase basic foodstuffs, tools, and/or clothing material from a country factor like Peter Davies. Similarly, as Monticello was in close proximity to the plantations of several native Virginia physicians like Drs. George Gilmer and Thomas Walker—both of whom were

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<sup>403</sup> Bear and Stanton, *Jefferson's Memorandum Books*, 209, 211, 41, 141, 205, 74, 75, 83, 153.

<sup>404</sup> Bear and Stanton, *Jefferson's Memorandum Books*, 255, 79, 211, 140, 77, 288, 289, 213

good friends of Jefferson—he could seek their medical expertise if and when his family or slaves needed care. Lastly, if Jefferson could not purchase fine furnishings and luxury items in person from a Williamsburg or Norfolk merchant, he could always rely on the brother-merchant duo of Richard and Thomas Adams for assistance.<sup>405</sup>

In 1771, for instance, while Jefferson was in the early phases of constructing the main house at Monticello, one of his major obsessions concerned furnishing one of the main rooms with a harpsichord or piano. Although Jefferson had initially told Thomas Adams that he wanted a clavichord, he had “since seen a Forte-piano” and became “charmed with it.”<sup>406</sup> Because of this new fixation, Jefferson asked Adams to purchase a piano-forte instead, as well as some fine articles of clothing and “an umbrella with brass ribs covered with green silk.”<sup>407</sup> The bottom line was that regardless of whether Jefferson found himself in the center of professional activity in a place like Williamsburg or in the relatively isolated confines of Monticello, professionals of all sorts were never too far removed from his daily activities. Thus, as Jefferson’s favorite granddaughter Ellen Wayles Randolph Coolidge later reminisced that her “grandpapa” always seemed to be in the company of “professional men, military and civil, lawyers [and] doctors,” during her childhood years at Monticello, it was hardly a coincidence.<sup>408</sup>

When one accounts for all that transpired between Virginia’s elite planters and professionals between the early-to-mid eighteenth century and the beginning of the American Revolution, some interactions and/or transactions undeniably stand out as more substantive or meaningful than others. For instance, enlisting a professional’s assistance

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<sup>405</sup> Bear and Stanton, *Jefferson’s Memorandum Books*, 84, 254

<sup>406</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Adams, 1 June, 1771, *Thomas Jefferson Papers, Digital Edition*

<sup>407</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Adams, 1 June, 1771, *Thomas Jefferson Papers, Digital Edition*

<sup>408</sup> Randolph, *The Domestic Life of Jefferson*, 401.

to provide comprehensive legal counsel, run iron operations, or initiate speculation in real estate development was much more complicated and costly than conducting smaller, everyday business affairs with one's local merchant, barber, craftsmen, or doctor.

Additionally, out of all the mid-to-upper-middling professionals that planters came into contact with in these various capacities, only a relatively small number of especially successful ones ultimately gained enough respect, wealth, and status to warrant the friendship and complete acceptance of FFV planters. However, one should not forget that from the perspective of every non-planting service provider who was living and working in Virginia during this time, a useful service that could not be fully supplied by a planter himself was often being sought out and provided instead by a professional. That fact alone validated their occupations, prompted some creative adaptation on the part of the planter class, and led to greater socioeconomic gains for Virginia professionals in the years to come.

## CHAPTER VIII

## CONCLUSION

Richmond after the Revolution: Microcosmic Reflections on the Place and Influence of  
Professionals in Eighteenth-Century Virginian Society

In the summer of 1788, a group of 170 delegates met at the state capital of Richmond to decide whether or not Virginia should ratify the newly-drafted Constitution of the United States. In the proceedings that followed, a series of furious debates ensued. On one end of the spectrum, Federalists like James Madison and Governor Edmund Randolph argued that America's system of government under the Articles of Confederation had proven impractical, ineffective, and weak. In their opinion, the only way the United States could expect to grow into a strong and prosperous nation was to adopt the Constitution and institute a government that could unify individual states under the rule of one central authority. Across the political aisle, however, an Anti-Federalist faction including Patrick Henry and George Mason made an equally passionate case for not ratifying the document. Criticizing the Constitution for its inattention to individual freedoms, they urged that a Bill of Rights be added to the document so that the egalitarian spirit of the American Revolution would forever be preserved and protected.<sup>409</sup>

As one of the most revered agitators of the Revolution and an outspoken champion of individual and states' rights, Henry's opposition to ratification drew particular notice. Having publicly abstained from attending the Constitutional Convention the year before, Henry associated the Constitution and most of its authors

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<sup>409</sup> For full transcripts of Virginia's ratification debates, replete with an index on the specific issues addressed by individual delegates, see James Madison and Jonathan Elliot, ed. *Debates in the Several State Conventions on the Adoption of the Federal Constitution, Volume III*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1881).

with the belief that a select, interested few secretly sought to restore the former American colonies to a monarchical state.<sup>410</sup> Putting his oratorical talents to use on the debate floor once again, Henry presented a spirited and thought-provoking argument against ratification.

Questioning both the legitimate need for governmental reform in Virginia and the motives of those who pushed so strongly for it, Henry alleged that Federalists were purposefully deflecting attention away from the political influence and economic advantages they alone stood to gain if the Constitution was ratified. Furthermore, Henry warned his fellow delegates that when a central government is overseen by a small group of elites concerned only with their own interests, the situation provides political leaders with opportunities to assume greater power and trample upon the rights of individual citizens. As far as Henry could surmise, Virginia's government had functioned efficiently in the aftermath of the American Revolution and its society had remained stable. Any suggestion of major changes to the status quo should thus be met by the people with intense suspicion and outright skepticism.<sup>411</sup>

While Virginia's delegates ultimately voted to ratify the Constitution, Henry's message did not fall on deaf ears. In fact, Virginia's support of the Constitution came only with the implicit expectation that a Bill of Rights would be added to the document. However, as crucial as Henry's presence at the Convention was for ensuring the recognition and protection of Americans' liberties, the implications of some lesser-known

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<sup>410</sup> John R. Vile, *The Constitutional Convention of 1787: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia Of America's Founding, Volume I* (ABC-CLIO, 2005), 21.

<sup>411</sup> Robert Douthat Meade, *Patrick Henry: Practical Revolutionary* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1969), 342-367.

comments he made stand out as equally important and crucial for understanding the place and influence of professionals in eighteenth-century Virginia society.

After Governor Randolph asserted that the Constitution was primarily designed to alleviate the general population's discontent with the Articles of Confederation, Henry boasted "the comfortable assurance" of knowing this was not true.<sup>412</sup> Then, just before Henry began to elaborate on such assurances, he suggested that his Federalist opponents were orchestrating more than just a power-play for greater political influence and financial gain. They were actually engaged in a patently class-driven conspiracy—one in which America's wealthiest and privileged citizens, operating under the auspices of federalism, were deliberately attempting to deceive and control those beneath their social station. Henry stated "the middle and lower ranks of people have not those illuminated ideas which the well-born are so happily possessed of; they cannot so readily perceive latent objects."<sup>413</sup>

At first, these offhanded references to class divisions may not seem all that significant, except in the sense that they coincided so clearly with Henry's charges of elite foul play. Yet, by taking a closer look at exactly what Henry's words meant to his contemporaries, as well as which contingencies and forces had come to affect such meanings, some noteworthy developments in Virginia's society come to the fore. In fact, Henry's observations provide some indirect, yet unique insight into how a growing number of upper-middling professionals and their kin had successfully defied the pretentious conventions of Virginia's planter *aristocracy* and firmly established

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<sup>412</sup> Madison and Elliott, ed., *The Debates*, 140.

<sup>413</sup> Madison and Elliott, ed., *The Debates*, 140.



themselves among the state's most elite citizens by the final decades of eighteenth century.

Despite the fact that Henry's remarks referred to American class divisions in a national context, Douglas Egerton has rightly discerned that Henry's "crude classifications" were still heavily based on the class divisions he encountered while living in southern society. Thus, from the perspective of a fellow Virginia delegate listening to the 1788 ratification debates, Henry's reference to *well-born* people would have likely been understood to mean wealthy gentlemen planters rather than wealthy businessmen from the Mid-Atlantic or New England states. Similarly, Henry's comments on the middling and lesser sorts were, in a Virginian context, meant to describe "hearty yeomen who worked their own farms" and the state's remainder of "landless poor whites," respectively.<sup>414</sup> When the African slaves that Henry neglected to mention are accounted for, the society he portrayed in 1788 appears little different from the one Virginia's planter "aristocrats" had fostered and propagated a century beforehand.

However, just as planter appearances could often be deceiving in eighteenth-century Virginia, so too was Henry's perspective on his society. To begin with, Henry's use of the term *well-born* was problematic. While one might be inclined to interpret the phrase literally and associate it exclusively with the type of hereditary title and privilege that FFV planters had so long ago attempted to establish in Virginia, that's not what the phrase entirely meant by the 1780s. Jackson Turner Main noted that among the well-

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<sup>414</sup> Douglas R. Egerton, *Gabriel's Rebellion: The Virginia Slave Conspiracies of 1800 and 1802* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 3.

born, middling, and lower ranks of society in post-Revolutionary America, “there is, and was, no clear dividing line between the first two.”<sup>415</sup> Explaining this further, Main stated:

The term “well-born” implied a hereditary aristocracy, and it is true that by the 1780s such a thing did exist in America, but its basis was pecuniary; property, not birth was the major factor in determining class structure. Phrases such as “the rich,” “men of wealth and ability,” men of sense and property” describe the upper class as the Revolutionary generation saw it.<sup>416</sup>

A close look at Virginia’s social hierarchy shortly after the Revolution indicates that the state’s *well-born* men included more than a few *nouveau riche* and/or highly regarded professionals. For all intents, many of these professionals stood on an equal footing with even the most prominent descendants of Virginia’s great planter families. Douglas Egerton notes that when Patrick Henry made his statement, many of the Virginians who owned enough land and slaves to include themselves among the ranks of *well-born* planters “had only recently arrived in the ranks of the gentry.”<sup>417</sup> Since many Virginia professionals had made large fortunes and started to build grand homes, manage new plantation estates, speculate in western lands, and/or purchase slaves, it appears as if professionals accounted for a sizeable portion of these new arrivals. Even for middling planters, who could individually claim about “a dozen slaves and a small brick home,” the gulf between yeoman subsistence and gentlemanly prosperity had become increasingly easier to bridge in Virginia by the final decades of the eighteenth century.<sup>418</sup>

Certainly, this observation is not meant to imply that social mobility suddenly existed where it had not previously. Colonial Virginia had always provided opportunities

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<sup>415</sup> Jackson Turner Main, *The Antifederalists: Critics of the Constitution, 1781-1788* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), 2-3.

<sup>416</sup> Main, *The Antifederalists*, 2-3.

<sup>417</sup> Egerton, *Gabriel’s Rebellion*, 3.

<sup>418</sup> Egerton, *Gabriel’s Rebellion*, 3.

for talented, ambitious white men of different backgrounds to gain money, prestige, and power if they were smart and bold enough to capitalize on those talents. Many progenitors of the colony's planter class were once living proof of that reality. However, where one's capacity for social climbing a century before 1788 was only as good as his ability to challenge the *aristocratic* restrictions planters imposed on Virginia's society, the potency of such restrictions had noticeably diminished over time.

Patrick Henry was a case in point. Henry's prominence was initially gained with the proceeds of his extensive legal practice, not an elite birthright. Only after he established himself as a professional did he become wealthy enough to purchase his own plantation and become connected enough to pursue an active role in Virginia politics. Though Henry certainly saw himself as a *well-born* member of Virginia's planter class by the 1780s, the numerous contingencies surrounding his status made it far more complicated than it had ever been before.<sup>419</sup> If anything, the criticisms Henry leveled against Federalists on behalf of less-privileged citizens testified to his own conflicted sense of identity and class loyalty—one where an elite planter-politician could not entirely forget how he had once been an upper-middling professional.

Despite the complexities of Henry's case, his status and circumstances were not exceptional. Indeed, just by taking a quick survey of post-Revolutionary Richmond at the time of Henry's speech, others of similar background and professional expertise were living and working throughout the city. Furthermore, if one were to go deeper and trace

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<sup>419</sup> Meade, *Patrick Henry: Practical Revolutionary*, 209. By 1788, Henry had already lived for over a decade at Scotchtown plantation in Hanover County and Leatherwood plantation in Henry County, the latter of which he purchased in 1779 after selling Scotchtown. Just a few years later, he retired to another plantation, Red Hill, in Charlotte County. According to Virginia's tax records of 1787 and 1788, Henry owned 22,190 acres, 66 slaves, 38 horses, and 66 heads of cattle when he attended Virginia's Convention. For further details, see Jackson Turner Main, "The One Hundred," *WMQ*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, No. 11 (1954), 376-377.

the connections that Richmond's government officials had with professionals circa 1788, he or she would soon discover that numerous professionals in even the most remote parts of the state could also confidently claim *well-born* or newly-elevated status.

Some of these men had recently entrenched themselves within Richmond's city limits as retirees, developers, or active professional practitioners. Others—more tangentially connected to Richmond's government leaders—continued to enhance their careers and fortunes by protecting Virginia's borders and laying claim to new western territories. Some could even be seen building new urban homes purchased with professional proceeds and contributing to the city's increasingly cosmopolitan personality. As individuals, they were different from one another and engaged in different types of non-planting occupations. Yet, together, they all stood out as the beneficiaries of socioeconomic mobility in colonial and Revolutionary Virginia.

Just a short distance from the site of Virginia's Ratification Convention, Dr. James McClurg and the much-heralded attorney, John Marshall, were both about to settle into new residences. Marshall's stately urban oasis on Shockoe Hill, which was just undergoing construction in 1788, would soon stand out as the physical embodiment of a man whose career in law and politics was building towards meteoric success.<sup>420</sup> While Marshall's father had drastically improved the family's middling status decades before while working as a surveyor and land agent for the Virginia planter magnate, Lord Fairfax, John Marshall had already made the middling origins and deferential social climbing of his forebears a distant memory by the 1780s. Marshall's service in the War for Independence and his success as an attorney had respectively provided him enough

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<sup>420</sup> Mary Wingfield Scott, *Houses of Old Richmond* (Richmond: Valentine Museum, 1941), 28-34.

respectability and wealth to afford the material comforts of an *aristocratic* Virginia planter.<sup>421</sup> Moreover, the young man's election to the House of Burgesses and extensive legal expertise indicated that the future Chief Justice of the Supreme Court possessed the potential for becoming a statesman of great influence.

James McClurg's situation looked promising as well. Although McClurg had experienced some financial troubles in the early stages of his medical career in Virginia, the American Revolution had presented men like him with great opportunities to distinguish themselves as doctors, surgeons, and/or hospital administrators. By the early 1780s, McClurg could include himself among a group of fellow physicians in Virginia like George Gilmer, William Rickman, and James Craik, whose socioeconomic status had become much more respectable due to their wartime contributions and professional income.<sup>422</sup> Dr. McClurg, in fact, grew comfortable enough with his circumstances by 1785 that he decided to relinquish his esteemed professorship at the College of William and Mary and establish a new residence and medical practice in Richmond.<sup>423</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> Jean Edward Smith, *John Marshall: Definer of a Nation* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996), 26-28.

<sup>422</sup> The fine residences of these individuals alone spoke to their prominence. William Rickman, the chief administrator of Continental Army Hospitals, married his second wife Elizabeth, who was from the wealthy Harrison Family of Virginia, and comfortably retired to Millford plantation (later referred to as Kittiewan) in Charles City County while Dr. Craik lived in a fine Alexandria townhome. For additional information on Rickman and Kittiewan, see Patrick O'Neill, "William Rickman and Kittiewan Plantation," unpublished Chief Historian's Report for Kittiewan Plantation. For info on Craik's residence in Virginia, see Deering Davis, Stephen P. Dorsey, and Ralph Cole Hall, *Alexandria Houses, 1750-1830* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1946), 74-75.

<sup>423</sup> "William and Mary Historical Timeline, 1750-1799," The College of William and Mary Official Website, <http://www.wm.edu/about/history/chronology/1750to1799/index.php> Accessed: 13 December, 2012. There is reason to believe that Dr. McClurg's financial situation was already improved immensely via his professional income as early as 1781, since he told Thomas Jefferson "it is true that I have leisure enough, at present, to apply to the Science you recommend." The "Science" McClurg was referring to was the study of law. However, citing a lack of proper books and a competitive number of bright, younger attorneys in Virginia, McClurg indicated that he would probably be better served to continue in a line of work more consistent with his medical education and training. For further details, see James McClurg to Thomas Jefferson, 17 May, 1781, Williamsburg, VA. Barbara B. Oberg and J. Jefferson Looney, eds., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson (TJ Papers)*, Digital Edition.

McClurg's eminence within his profession had also helped him to gain important friends and realize some significant political opportunities. In 1784, Thomas Jefferson, who knew McClurg as a college professor, surgeon general, and personal family physician, asked the doctor to consider serving as America's Secretary of Foreign Affairs.<sup>424</sup> Additionally, when Patrick Henry refused to attend the Constitutional Convention in 1787, Virginia officials asked McClurg to go in his place.<sup>425</sup> Specifically describing the former of these two posts as a "genteel and respectable" form of employment, McClurg gratefully acknowledged that Jefferson's "condescension" and "interest in [his] advancement" was a true blessing to a man of his profession and stature.<sup>426</sup> And while McClurg ultimately turned down the Secretary post and chose not to sign the Constitution out of fear that he would alienate some of his friends, he remained politically active and influential in the following years through his service in Richmond's local government.<sup>427</sup>

In the same Church Hill district of Richmond where McClurg was establishing himself in the 1780s, the New Kent merchant and planter, Richard Adams was playing the lucrative role of an urban developer. Born to the immigrant son of a "merchant tailor" in London, Richard and his brother, Thomas, had parlayed their considerable talents as a trans-Atlantic mercantile team into immense wealth.<sup>428</sup> Richard, who facilitated the Virginia side of the brothers' affairs, benefited from the family business and had enjoyed the lifestyle of a well-to-do Virginia planter ever since. In 1788, as

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<sup>424</sup> Oberg and Looney, eds., note per James McClurg to Thomas Jefferson, 17 May, 1781, Williamsburg, VA, *TJ Papers*, Digital Edition.

<sup>425</sup> Vile, *The Constitutional Convention*, 469-471.

<sup>426</sup> James McClurg to Thomas Jefferson, 12 April, 1784, Williamsburg, VA, *TJ Papers*, Digital Edition.

<sup>427</sup> Vile, *The Constitutional Convention*, 469-471.

<sup>428</sup> Richard Adams, "Letters of Richard Adams to Thomas Adams," *VMHB*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Oct., 1914), 379-395. For the specific reference on the occupation and status of Adams brothers' father, see 379n.

Adams began work on his own luxurious Richmond home overlooking the James River, he boasted ownership of 10,865 acres and 108 slaves across seven counties.<sup>429</sup>

Although Richard Adams' initial investment in Church Hill was largely based on the rumor that the new state capitol building would be constructed there, he still held a lion's share of the city's choice real estate. Since an increasing number of wealthy professionals and government officials were building more new residences and offices in Richmond's burgeoning city limits, Adams stood to enhance his already-large fortune by selling city plots to the highest bidder.<sup>430</sup> Planter William Byrd II owned the property encompassing Church Hill in the early eighteenth century and encouraged merchants and various other immigrant professionals to settle there and establish a thriving, fall-line trading town. Thus, as a professional of Adams' stature assumed a similar role in the final decades of the century, the changing of the guard seemed complete.

Even as Edmund Randolph carried out his gubernatorial duties on the opposite end of Richmond in the late 1780s, his correspondence was full of the people and professional trends that signified an important expansion and diversification of Virginia's upper class. Over the course of just a few months in 1787, Governor Randolph learned quickly how the policy decisions he made in Richmond could become intimately entangled with the actions of some less-refined, yet successful self-made professionals. While one of Randolph's biggest responsibilities as governor involved protecting Virginia's western borders against Indian attacks and developing better trade relations with Indian allies, the men that he depended on most to make that happen were not

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<sup>429</sup> Main, "The One Hundred," 368. For information on Adams' Richmond home, see Scott, *Houses of Old Richmond*, 15-19.

<sup>430</sup> For a brief assessment of how Richmond was drawing in more professional residents after the Revolution, especially lawyers, see Marie Tyler-McGraw, *At the Falls: Richmond, Virginia and its People* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 79-80.

natural elites like him. On the contrary, as the great-great-grandson of William Randolph carried out on his family's *aristocratic* tradition of political dominance, the men he depended on in western military matters were rougher frontiersmen whose professional careers as soldiers and freelancing entrepreneurs were forged in western Virginia.

Two such correspondents were none other than Arthur Campbell and Benjamin Logan. An aging, but still extremely active soldier, Campbell had become one of the highest ranking officers in Virginia both during and after the American Revolution. In fact, roughly a decade later in 1798, Campbell proudly claimed that designation outright in a letter to George Washington.<sup>431</sup> Carrying out a similar role in Kentucky County, Virginia, Logan had also improved his status and fortunes greatly as an Indian fighter since the end of the French and Indian War.<sup>432</sup>

However, in 1787, Campbell and Logan both encountered potentially career-ending problems. In an effort to wield the considerable power he had gained in western Virginia as a soldier, political leader, and landowner, Campbell attempted to orchestrate Washington County's secession from Virginia. The idea was to then include Washington County into a newly-formed "State of Franklin"—an area which was supposed to encompass western portions of Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky, and North Carolina. The plot, however, was reported to Virginia authorities by several of Campbell's enemies and an investigation commenced.<sup>433</sup>

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<sup>431</sup> Arthur Campbell to George Washington, 13 August, 1798, Washington County, VA, *GW Papers*, Digital Edition

<sup>432</sup> Charles Gano Talbert, *Benjamin Logan: Kentucky Frontiersman* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1962).

<sup>433</sup> Hartwell L. Quinn, *Arthur Campbell: Pioneer and Patriot of the "Old Southwest"* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., 1990), 73-97.



Logan came under heavy scrutiny for a vicious Indian campaign he had overseen in the western Virginia county of Kentucky—one in which numerous unauthorized orders were carried out and a peaceful Shawnee Chief, Moluntha, was murdered by one of Logan's officers under a flag of truce.<sup>434</sup> Although Campbell and Logan both intended to fight the charges, they also realized how beneficial it would be to procure the newly elected governor's pardon. Consequently, they each extended an olive branch to Governor Randolph in the best way they knew how—they offered the Governor their professional services and advice.

After congratulating Randolph on his election in 1787, Campbell began to relay valuable details of the latest Indian attacks taking place in and around Washington and Kentucky Counties.<sup>435</sup> Then, as Campbell wrote subsequent letters to Randolph, he slowly began alluding to how he specifically envisioned the future state of Virginia's westward expansion and Indian relations. Offering Randolph his comprehensive plans for future trading treaties and how to obtain free navigation of the Tennessee and Mississippi Rivers for Virginians, the old veteran campaigned vigorously to be elected as Virginia's new Superintendant of Indian Affairs.<sup>436</sup> Although Campbell did not receive the commission, the professional relationship he cultivated with Randolph did help him avoid conviction for treason. Moreover, by acquitting Campbell of wrongdoing, Randolph was able to retain one of his most experienced Indian fighters and treaty

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<sup>434</sup> Talbert, *Benjamin Logan*, 203-214.

<sup>435</sup> Quinn, *Arthur Campbell*, 94. For the specific updates on Indian affairs, see Arthur Campbell to Edmund Randolph, 9 March and 17 March, 1787, *The Executive Papers of Governor Edmund Randolph, 1786-1788, LVA*

<sup>436</sup> Arthur Campbell to Edmund Randolph, 15 April, 1787, Washington County, VA, *The Executive Papers of Governor Edmund Randolph, 1786-1788, LVA*

negotiators as commander of the 70<sup>th</sup> Virginia Militia—a prestigious post Campbell held from 1777 until his retirement in 1799.<sup>437</sup>

Logan took a similar approach towards gaining Randolph's trust and confidence. However, Logan directly solicited Randolph about the charges against him. Claiming that "if it tends to my prejudice, I am able to justify my conduct before any court of justice on earth," Logan let Governor Randolph know that he stood by his actions in the Moluntha debacle.<sup>438</sup> Like Campbell, Logan then provided valuable intelligence to Randolph on the state of Indian affairs and military preparedness in western Virginia, thus showing the Governor his worth. Not long after Randolph began corresponding with Logan, Randolph commended Logan's conduct and services to Congress. By simply relying on the professional skills that had helped to improve his socioeconomic prospects in the first place, Logan was able to continue in a military career which provided him with land, income, and some political influence in the new state of Kentucky.<sup>439</sup>

Neither Campbell nor Logan was immensely rich or heavily involved with planting. Campbell, in fact, was an outspoken critic of slavery. Although he did own a considerable amount of property across Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio, and North Carolina by the beginning of the nineteenth century, Campbell chose primarily to speculate in land as opposed to running a plantation.<sup>440</sup> Similarly, as Logan gained more reputation and land, the nine slaves, nine horses, forty one cattle, and \$3,395 worth of personal property he owned at his death were relatively modest holdings.<sup>441</sup> Yet, in the western part of the state, where these men lived and operated, they did not have to be hereditary *aristocrats* or

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<sup>437</sup> Quinn, *Arthur Campbell*, 118.

<sup>438</sup> Talbert, *Benjamin Logan*, 214.

<sup>439</sup> Talbert, *Benjamin Logan*, 225.

<sup>440</sup> Quinn, *Arthur Campbell*, 119.

<sup>441</sup> Talbert, *Benjamin Logan*, 300.

large planters to become Virginians of status and consequence. Their professional expertise in military matters and Indian relations provided them with choice land bounties, a respectable income, and an avenue towards gaining the good graces of Virginia's planter elites.

### Closing Remarks

Gordon Wood has repeatedly brought attention to how a professional contingent of business elites in the northern and middle colonies struggled in the immediate aftermath of the American Revolution to maintain control over what they saw as low-to-middling hordes of greedy republican individualists. According to Wood, many of these lower class people had taken the egalitarian spirit of the Revolution to heart and subsequently considered themselves inferior to no one. Thus, while members of the lower and middling sorts advanced themselves professionally and economically at the early outset of America's Market Revolution and gradually converted their financial gain into greater status and political involvement, they radically began to upset the previous balance of power.<sup>442</sup> Furthermore, as increasing numbers of these men began crowding oversized state legislatures and selfishly placing the interests of their constituencies ahead of the country's greater interests, their legislative licentiousness threatened to pervert the republican principles associated with sacrificing personal gain for the good of the whole.<sup>443</sup>

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<sup>442</sup> For an analysis of America's Market Revolution, see Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994)

<sup>443</sup> For an analysis of this post-revolutionary phenomenon, see Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993); For an explanation of "legislative licentiousness," see Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969). Wood's conclusions in *Radicalism* have particularly been criticized by various historians due to the fact that he broadly applies his analysis to the entire United States despite directing less attention to the southern states and the preponderance of slavery and agriculture in the post-

Wood's conclusions are true enough for the middle and northern colonies. Yet, as the web of professional relations emanating from Richmond alone suggests, elite Virginians did not have the same experience. Certainly, there were those within planter ranks who, in the interest of preserving status and control after the Revolution, allied with other wealthy Americans across the United States to curb the power of the low-to-middling orders by writing a new Constitution. Within their own state though, Virginia's planters and many of their newfound professional cohorts had already managed to incorporate elements of republicanism and capitalism into their lives on relatively favorable terms and with significantly less social and political tumult.

Thanks in large part to the continued presence and actions of Virginian professionals, the state experienced significant professional diversification, increased urban development, and economic growth throughout the eighteenth century. As a result, colonial Virginia proved a deceptively progressive environment for a new crop of self-made professionals to thrive. Yet, through a series of mutually agreeable negotiations between planters and professionals along the way, FFV planters still held their fair share of preexisting status and influence and co-opted their choice of professionals into elite ranks. Moreover, Virginia remained staunchly committed to agriculture, planter culture, and black slavery well into the nineteenth century.

In the end, there is no denying that the financial rewards, social advancement, and political clout that Virginia professionals gained throughout the eighteenth century outwardly contrasted with earlier days when only a select, elite group of planters basked

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Revolutionary South. Based on the unique dynamic between Virginia planters and professionals, such critiques seem (at least in part) justified. However, it should be noted that Wood's discussion of an egalitarian "backlash" among elites in the northern and middle colonies remains one of the most thorough and accurate of its kind to date.

on their plantations and monopolized numerous occupational and political roles. Actually, much of the change was attributable to the egalitarian ideals and capitalist forces that would continue to guide the ensuing course of American history and re-emerge as central elements of the American Dream. However, for white professionals in colonial and Revolutionary Virginia, these were hardly watershed sources of transformation. Rather, self-help, equality of opportunity, and social mobility were omnipresent components of their society. They only had to be smart, ambitious, and bold enough to believe it. In turn, all Virginia's planters did was look towards the future, slightly alter the membership requirements for their elite club, and concede room for an upstart group of professionally-driven Second Families.

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